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# BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No 13

THE  
KNOWLHURST MYSTERY  
or The Strange Adven-  
tures of Leslie Norton



"Bang!" The mortar was fired. The line hummed as it unreeled itself from the wheel on shore. A loud cheer from aboard the Lone Star told that the shot line had reached the wreck.



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*A Different Complete Story Every Week*

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## THE KNOWLHURST MYSTERY;

• OR,

### The Strange Adventures of Leslie Norton.

By FRANK SHERIDAN.

#### CHAPTER I.

LESLIE NORTON.

"I tell yer ye've got a Jonah aboard. If ever a vessel was doomed it is this 'ere ship."

"You miserable old hunk, what are you always croaking so for?"

"'Cause I sees farther than most."

"Then I'd shut my eyes if I were you, for you never see any good."

"It's a lie!"

"A lie, is it? I'll make you swallow your words before we reach our dock."

"You will, eh?"

"I will."

The two men stood facing each other with anger depicted in unmistakable fashion on their features.

They were both dressed in the ordinary garb of men before the mast; in fact, they were seamen on board the good steamship *Lone Star*, bound from Galveston to New York, with freight and passengers.

The men glared angrily at each other, and it really did seem that they would come to blows, when the quartermaster approached, puffing and snorting like a grampus.

If ever any one was out of place on board ship it was Quartermaster Nelson.

He was about five feet two inches in height, and his diameter must have been very nearly as much, for he was the stoutest man that ever trod a deck.

Every exertion caused him to puff and blow, and for some moments he was unable to speak.

"What—are—you—rowing—about?" he asked, pausing between each word to get his breath.

"Dan here will have it we've got a Jonah aboard."

"And he's right," said the quartermaster.

The seaman put his hand to his cap and saluted his superior.

"If you say so it must be right."

"Of course it's right. Didn't you know that old Myers, the stoker, was called Jonah?" and the quartermaster chuckled as though he had given utterance to an extraordinary good joke.

The quartermaster walked along the deck, and was about descending to the saloon deck, when he caught sight of a youth, one of the passengers, leaning over the bulwark and looking the very picture of misery.

"Sick!" muttered the officer, still standing and watching the youth.

Nelson had taken quite a fancy to the young passenger, and whenever he had a few minutes to spare he liked to talk to him.

"Hello, young sir! what thoughts trouble you just now?"

The lad looked up.

His face was sad, but the brightness of his eyes proved that joy, instead of sorrow, was more natural to him.

"I was thinking, sir, that it would be better if I were down there"—pointing to the water.

"Water is all very well in its way, but when it gets through soaking a man he isn't must good."

"I don't want to be muck good; I want to die."



"You—want—to—die? I am ashamed of you; there is a great future before you."

"Is there, sir?"

"Of course. Let me see, you like politics; well, I wouldn't wonder if you were President of the United States some day. How old are you?"

"Seventeen, sir."

"Ever done any business?"

"No, sir; only just left school."

"What was your preference?"

"The law, Mr. Nelson."

"Bad, very bad."

"Do you think so?"

"Sure of it. Ask your friends."

"I have not a friend in the whole world, sir."

"Wh-a-a-t?"

"It is true, Mr. Nelson. I have not got a friend."

"Where are you going then, and what are you going to do?"

"To my uncle, sir."

"Isn't he a friend?"

"I don't know, sir. I don't even know whether he will receive me."

"The —" the quartermaster mumbled some word, but what it was the young man did not hear.

"I will tell you my story, sir, if I may."

"Do so, my lad; it may ease your heart a bit."

"My father, sir, was a lawyer—"

"Ah!"

"And we all thought a very successful one. We lived about a mile out of the city—"

"What city?"

"Galveston."

"Oh! Go ahead."

"Well, sir, father one night was coming home; he had been to an auction sale, and had a large sum of money in his pockets. He was turning a corner, when a man leaped out of the shadow of a tree and shouted: 'Hands up.' My father was as quick as lightning, and he raised his gun at the same time. Two shots were fired, and one man fell, but it wasn't father. Then father went to the coroner, and told him where he would find the body. Of course, they didn't do anything to father, but a few days after some pals of the man who was killed laid in wait and killed my father, just out of revenge. Oh, sir, it was awful, to see how my poor mother suffered. We—there was only mother and I—wept until we couldn't cry any longer. I shall never forget it."

"Mother found that father left only a small sum of money, and after the funeral expenses were paid her income was a very meager one; but she did not tell me until—until—just before she died."

The youth gulped down a lump which would rise in his throat, and there was a very marked moisture in his eyes.

"She kept me at school, and I did not know how many things she had to go without, how many sacrifices she had to make; but, poor dear, the fever came, and a month ago—she—she—died."

"Your greatest loss," murmured the kindhearted quartermaster.

"Just before she died she begged me to promise I would go to my father's brother, Peter Norton, who lives near New York City. I wrote him, but he did not reply. He never forgave my father for marrying my mother—she was named Annie Leslie. That is where I get my first name from. I am Leslie Norton."

"Are you sure you have your uncle's right address?"

"No, sir."

"How do you think you can find him?"

"I shall look in a directory, and if I do not find his name I shall go to all the florists—wholesale, I mean—"

"Was he a florist?"

"An amateur one. He devoted all his life—as my mother told me, to orchids and other flowers. He has one ambition, and that is to raise a black tulip."

The quartermaster was again called away. The conversation was not continuous, but had occurred in the intervals between duties.

Leslie Norton had recovered from his melancholy, and was straining his eyes across the clear blue expanse of water to catch sight of land or sail.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WRECK OF THE LONE STAR.

"If all goes well, we shall be in our dock in New York in twelve hours," the captain said, as he sat down at the head of the long table in the dining-room for breakfast.

The *Lone Star* was an old-fashioned steamer, built for comfort. Its staterooms opened off the saloon, and were spacious and comfortable, far different to the little cupboards called staterooms on the great ocean liners.

In the saloon, a long table down the center was laden with all the good things of life. Semi-tropical fruits and good, substantial fare made even the most delicate stomach feel easy.

There were not many passengers, for most people prefer a railroad journey in winter to an ocean voyage, and those who could afford the luxury of a sleeper did not care to risk old Neptune's fury.

Besides our young friend, Leslie Norton, there were only six passengers.

Breakfast was nearly over, when a strange and sudden noise caused each one to drop his knife and the fruit, and the captain left the table to hurry up the companionway.

Again the horrible noise was heard.

It was like a human groan intensified a thousand times.

The saloon grew darker, and gradually it dawned on the minds of the passengers that a fog had arisen.

A wild, weird sound mingled with the foghorn, and the vessel began to toss about uneasily.

In a short time Leslie stood on deck, a rope around his waist, the other end lashed to the mast.

In the dense fog only the imagination could picture what was taking place.

The steamer was flung down on her side in the waves, until the masts seemed to dip into the water.

Springing up again, a heavy sea struck her, and with the noise of a thousand guns she went over on the other side.

Then she seemed to want to stand up on her stern, but before she had arisen quite perpendicularly, changed her mind, and thought the bow would make a better base.

The foghorn was groaning and moaning all the time.

The wind whistled through the rigging, making weird noises almost supernatural.

Every board of the deck groaned and creaked, as though each had its own particular sound to contribute to the general discord.

The sky grew darker than ever. Not a glimmer of light could be seen anywhere.

The hours passed on, and still the fog did not rise.

The steering gear had broken, and the vessel was at the mercy of the waves.

Not one of the passengers realized the danger they were in.



The captain called all the passengers into the saloon.

"My friends, I should be remiss in my duty if I did not tell you that only the slightest chance of weathering the storm exists."

"You don't mean it!"

"Unfortunately, it is the truth. I have hopes that the fog may rise, and then we could better tell what to do."

"Why don't you lower the boats?" asked one.

"Yes, I insist! It is your duty, captain," added another.

"My duty, sir! And who are you, to tell me what my duty is? I have not ordered the boats to be lowered, neither shall I!"

He spoke slowly, and with very positive emphasis.

"I do not say we shall not pull through, but the crisis is serious. To lower the boats would be suicidal. Not a boat could live an hour in such a sea. If we have to be drowned, it would be far better to risk our lives on a big steamer, with a chance of escape, than to go out in a boat, to die in half an hour."

"Captain, you are wanted on deck."

It was Leslie who conveyed the message, and his face proved that he knew more of the danger than those who had obeyed the captain's call.

"What is it, sir?"

"We are aground."

The steamer creaked and groaned like a leviathan in distress.

Once it seemed that her back must be broken, such a terrible thud and groaning was heard.

The captain had loaded his signal-gun, and the heavy boom shook the vessel from stem to stern.

A few minutes later another gun was fired, but there was no response.

The steamer was aground, and was creaking and straining its timbers in an endeavor to get loose.

A rocket was fired, and as it circled its way through the air it was accompanied by the prayers of every one on board.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The cheers were evoked by the sight in the distance of a light.

The captain knew it was a Coston light, and was displayed by the gallant life-savers on the coast.

The light was kept burning, and a second rocket was fired from the deck of the *Lone Star*.

On land, Patrol James Gage was the first to notice the distressed steamer through the fog.

A few minutes later Patrol Nicholas Granger, of Station No. 5, had seen it, and flashed his Coston light.

Gage did the same.

The men hurried back to their stations, and in a very few minutes the beach apparatus was hauled out, and, with a loud cheer, the men tumbled it along the beach opposite to where the stranded steamer was lying.

The point was about midway between Stations 4 and 5, and it was a matter of emulation to see which could reach the wreck first.

It was the crew of Station No. 5 which first reached the wreck, but No. 4 was on the ground before the others had time to commence preparations.

"No boat can live in such a sea," said the captain of No. 5.

"No; only the lifeline can be of any use," responded the chief of Station No. 4.

Captain Carpenter, of No. 5, got the mortar in position, put in the powder, and the long, thin shot, weighing about thirty pounds, was slipped in.

Attached to the shot was a piece of wrought iron, with an eye in it, on which a thin line was bent.

"Can you see her?" asked Captain Carpenter.

"No."

"Fire a rocket."

Captain Whissit, of No. 4, flashed his Coston light several times, to attract attention, and then sent a rocket whizzing through the air in the direction of the grounded steamer.

As the rocket passed over the ill-fated vessel, the captain of No. 5 watched the little glimmer of light, for that was his only guide as to where to aim.

Bang!

The mortar was fired.

The line hummed as it unreeled itself from the wheel on the shore.

The shot line had reached the wreck.

A loud cheer from the crew and passengers of the *Lone Star* told the joyful news that Captain Carpenter had, at the first shot, succeeded.

The shore end of the shot line was attached to the whip, an endless rope long enough to reach from the shore to the vessel.

The crew hauled away, and soon the whip line was adjusted according to directions to the mast.

Then followed the hawser, a strong rope four inches in circumference, and with it another tally-board, giving directions how to attach it to the mast.

The crews on shore busied themselves with the anchor and crotches.

When the signal came that the hawser was secured, the breeches buoy was hauled to the ship.

"Now, ladies, you go first," said the captain, gallantly, addressing the only two females on board.

The rope was taut when the car started, but the sea was treacherous, and in a moment the life-car was sunk beneath the waves, from which the cries of its occupants could be plainly heard.

Again it was swung in the air, with a suddenness which tested the hawser to its utmost.

The car swung back and forth, and danced up and down like a thing of life possessed with the very spirit of diabolism.

But the hundred and eighty yards between the ship and the shore were soon traversed, and the liberated ladies placed upon dry land.

The captain was the last to leave the steamer.

The life-savers packed their apparatus and returned to their stations.

The passengers and crew were taken care of by the keeper of No. 5, their clothes dried, and their inner wants supplied.

It was morning before the last had been rescued, and yet the fog hung like a heavy pall over all.

The captain had brought away his log-book, and sat with it on his knee, while the white, curling smoke of a good cigar, which he knew had come from Cuba, wended its way up to the painted rafters of the life-saving station-room.

A sudden exclamation, followed by the dropping of the log-book to the floor, and the burning of his mouth with his cigar, for he had put the wrong end into his mouth, made every one in the station wonder what fit of mental aberration had overtaken the skipper.

"Any one seen young Leslie Norton?" he asked.

Had an earthquake shaken the building to its foundations, or a bomb of dynamite unexpectedly exploded, the excitement could not have been greater.

No one remembered seeing Leslie.

The captain asked the keeper of the station how many had been saved.

The answer was one short of the number known to have been on board.



Leslie must be on board the ill-fated steamer still.  
Alive?

That seemed scarcely probable, for if he were alive he would have wanted to be saved.

But, if not alive, how did he come by his death?

The crew of the *Lone Star* talked the matter over with the life-savers, and it was resolved to launch the lifeboat and try to reach the ship.

Brave men those life-savers are.

They think nothing of personal safety; they live to save and rescue others.

With a "Yo, heave O!" the lifeboat was pushed into the water.

The crew sprang in, and grasped their oars.

"Yo, heave O! Merrily O!"

The boat was halfway to the ship, when a wave struck it and rolled it over.

But it was self-righting, and, beyond a wetting, the men were uninjured.

At last, with a shout of triumph, Captain Carpenter swung himself up the chains to the deck of the *Lone Star*.

As he did so, a ray of sunshine burst through the thick fog-cloud, and, like magic, the heavy pall was lifted, and the glorious sunshine spread itself over sea and land.

The wind quieted down.

A lull settled over all, and the life-savers, having secured their boat, swarmed to the deck of the disabled steamer.

They searched the deck thoroughly, but found no trace of Leslie Norton.

They descended to the lower deck; the water had left its mark on everything; the tossing of the ship had smashed the furniture of the saloon, broken the glass in the bar, and created piles of *débris* on every side.

The men moved about with caution, peered into every state-room, looked under tables, searched everywhere, but no sign of a living creature manifested itself, save only once, when a huge rat ran out of the deserted bar and tried to escape.

Down in the hold the same disorder and confusion reigned.

For hours the life-savers searched, but no Leslie Norton could be found, either dead or alive.

"Let us clear away some of this *débris*," suggested a life-saver, as he pointed with his toe to a heap of rubbish close to the bar.

Broken chairs, beer bottles, ornaments and almost every conceivable thing in the neighborhood of the bar had been piled by the tossing of the ship in disorderly order, if such a paradoxical expression is pardonable.

The men cut their hands with broken glass, but they did not care; they worked willingly and cheerfully, and when they found a Tam O'Shanter cap, which Leslie had worn, they were animated by a hope that the youth himself was beneath the *débris*, and perhaps still alive.

Hour after hour they worked, until nature began to assert itself, and certain demands were made by their stomachs.

From early morning to nearly sunset they had toiled without food.

The search was ended.

No Leslie Norton could be found, and the men returned to the shore, asking themselves the questions:

"What can have become of him?"

"Where is Leslie Norton?"

If he had been washed overboard, his body would have been thrown up on the beach between the two life-saving stations, but although the beach had been patrolled, nobody had been found.

It was a mystery.

### CHAPTER III.

KNOWLHURST.

About a mile from the main road, at the end of a lane which led nowhere else, stood a strange-looking, old-fashioned house.

The house was large and roomy; the upper floors were supported on roughly-hewn oak beams, which had never been covered, but had acquired a beauty of their very age.

The outer door was of oak—not the highly-polished, paneled and molded oak doors which we admire so much in these modern days, but solid slabs of wood, four inches thick, studded in various places with heavy nails.

As the door opened, a large hall, big enough for a horse to exercise in, was discovered.

At the side of the hall, opposite the door, was the chimney and fireplace, almost as large as a modern room.

Above the high arch which domed the fireplace was a crane, from which had suspended many a sheep and pig in days gone by, when the owners of the house loved to have the meat roasted in front of a good wood fire.

By the side of the andirons were boxes, which served as seats, and in which salt, and other things needing warmth, were kept.

The rooms opened out from either side of the hall, and were large and lofty.

In one of the rooms there was much to attract the attention of a stranger.

A bookcase of Spanish mahogany, almost black with age, was built in the wall on one side, and close to it a desk, also a fixture; but the desk was inclosed by glass, and the stranger who wondered why such care should be taken in it had only to look through the glass, and he would see two pieces of paper—the one old blue foolscap, on which a few lines were written, and then crossed out, and the other more modern, on which was written the inscription:

"This desk has never been used since his excellency, General George Washington, wrote his celebrated orders before the battle of Princeton."

Then the stranger's eyes would revert back to the old blue sheet, and they would recognize the writing as that of the immortal Washington, and see that the lines were the first draft of his orders.

In a high-backed mahogany chair, which most probably was the one used by Washington, sat an old man.

His hair was white as snow, his beard long, reaching nearly to his waist, and just as white.

The man stood up.

There was a majesty about him which harmonized with the room.

He was tall and well-formed, his body as straight as a soldier's, and as he looked around the room, his eyes flashed with all the brightness of twenty years, instead of the three score and ten winters he had lived.

"'Tis strange," he muttered, "how the coming of that boy affects me. I love the young, but they love me not. But for him my love is more than for all others besides. It seems strange that after all these years he should come to me. What will he be like? Will he resemble his father or——"

The old man paused.

"I'm not angry now. Why should I be? She made him a good wife, and, if he was satisfied, why should I complain? Let me see, it must be twenty years since he defied me and left with pretty Annie Leslie. Twenty years! And he was then but twenty years old. I felt quite aged beside him. I was fifty, he but twenty. Strange family, ours! My father, his father; my mother



—Heaven rest her—how different to his mother; the same father, but different mothers. I am getting garrulous! Am I getting old? I suppose so."

Old Peter Norton walked around the room, not noticing anything, but deep in thought.

He had received a letter telling him that his nephew, Leslie Norton, was now homeless, an orphan, and that, in obedience to a promise made to his dying mother, was coming North to see his uncle.

That was three days ago, and the secret had been kept from the other members of his family.

Other members? Yes, for merry laughter often resounded among the rafters of Knowlhurst, and young people often danced to the music of a modern piano in another room.

Peter Norton had never married, and in his old age had longed for the magnetic pleasures, which youth brings to a house.

He had adopted a nephew, the only child of his own sister, and a niece, the only child of a half-sister.

We have learned from his soliloquy that Peter's father had married twice.

His first wife lived to see Peter and Susan grow up until they were in their teens, and the second wife was mother to two children, a son, who became the father of our mysterious hero, Leslie, and a daughter, who married a New Englander named Loring.

Moore Burnett was eighteen, and Eleanor Loring sixteen at the time our story opens.

Madam Dupont, a French lady of unquestionable probity, acted as housekeeper, and was a very pleasant chaperon for Eleanor.

Peter Norton had hesitated telling his household about the expected arrival of another nephew.

Had he any suspicion that Moore, who was a jealous youth, would object?

Perhaps so.

But, as the time drew near for the arrival of Leslie, he felt it would be unjust to all if the fact remained longer a secret.

It was but seldom that the old recluse dined with the family, but on this day he sent word that he would partake of the evening dinner with them.

The dining-room was peculiar, at least for this country, for its walls were covered with paneled oak, and every panel looked as though it might be a door to a secret chamber.

A few old paintings, principally hunting scenes, hung on the oaken walls.

Peter Norton lived well. He was reputed to be rich, and certainly his family never needed to practice economy, for its wants were always anticipated, and the luxuries were greater than any anticipated.

The dinner, not a modern five or six-course one, but an old-fashioned, three-course affair—soup, joint and pastry—was nearly over before Peter spoke of the news he had to tell.

"You young people must be lonely sometimes," he said, looking at Eleanor as he spoke.

"No, sir; you never allow that," answered Moore.

"But I am thinking of increasing my family."

"Not by getting married, I hope, sir?" exclaimed Moore Burnett, almost excitedly.

Eleanor got up from her seat, and threw her arms around the old man's neck, whispering in his ear:

"Not to Madam Dupont, is it? She would make you so happy!"

"You silly goose! No, children, I am not going to make an old fool of myself—I am not going to get married."

"I should think not," added Madam Dupont, who had not heard

Eleanor's whisper, and who had such a good position that she was not in favor of surrendering it to a mistress.

"No; but you have heard of your Uncle Paul?"

"The one who married beneath him," added Moore, almost vindictively.

"The one who married a good woman, who made him an excellent wife. He is dead—killed by an assassin—and his wife is dead, also—"

"Any children, sir?"

"Yes, Moore, one, now on the way here."

"Oh, you dear, kind, old uncle! Is she older than me?"

"She?"

"Yes; didn't you say it was a girl?"

"No, Nelly; you are wrong this time; 'it,' as you designate your cousin, is a boy, and about seventeen years old."

"Is he coming here, sir?"

"Yes, Moore."

"I am sorry."

"Why, my boy?"

"He will upset all my arrangements; besides, we were getting along so nicely, and he is sure to be a prig."

"A what?"

"Prig. Conceited, ill-educated, bumptious lad."

"Why?"

"Wasn't he educated in Texas?"

"I believe so."

"By his mother?"

"Most likely."

"Then, mark me, sir, he knows everything, and we shall all be snubbed. I am very sorry he is coming. But he will not stay long, will he?"

"Stay! Of course he will! He will stay just as long as he behaves himself; he is my nephew, and as such I hope you will receive him."

When old Peter Norton spoke with emphasis, no one cared to contradict him.

It was the end of the discussion.

The coffee was partaken of in silence, and all were pleased when Mr. Norton arose from the table.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GHOSTLY VISITANT.

"Nell, what do you think about it?" asked Moore, the next morning.

"Think? Why, that I will make a better S than that before I leave."

The cousins were skating on a pretty lake—called so by courtesy; in reality, it was only a pond, about a quarter of an acre in extent, but, being on Norton's estate, and prettily located, it was always called the lake.

"You know I don't mean that! What do you think of uncle's latest freak?"

"Freak?"

"Yes—bringing that Texan here."

"Is he any the worse for being a Texan?"

"Of course he is. Don't you know that he will either be a regular cowboy sort of fellow, without refinement, or a namby-pamby dude, who knows everything?"

"I don't see why."

"Nell, Nell, it is like you. I know what it is—you want to fascinate this—Leslie, I think uncle called him. What an absurd name to give a boy."



"I don't think it is any worse than Moore."

"But that was my father's name."

"And Leslie was his mother's maiden name."

"He will have a champion in you, Nell."

"I do not think he will need one."

"I hate him."

"Hush! Don't talk like that, Moore."

"I feel it, so why shouldn't I say it? If he only stays as long as he behaves himself, it won't be long."

While the cousins were skating and talking on the lake, Peter Norton was in his conservatory, studying the effect of different colored glasses on the color of tulips.

He had read of the attempts in Holland to produce a black tulip, and had also read and re-read Dumas' novels.

With all the enthusiasm of a youth, he set himself to work to produce the desired flower.

True, he had failed hundreds of times, but that was no reason why he should give up.

He had two objects in life, and one hobby.

His hobby was the cultivation of orchids; his ambition, besides the black tulip, was to make a flying machine which would really fly.

The hours passed, and he still manipulated the glasses, so that the rays of the sun might shine through different colors.

Heedless of the passage of the time, he wondered why the place was getting dark.

Could it be that a fog had arisen?

If so, his orchids must be protected, for he knew, or believed, that the slightest suspicion of fog was fatal to some kinds of his favorite plant.

Passing to the orchid house, he found that, instead of fog, night was approaching.

He had been the whole day without realizing the passage of the fleeting hours.

Waiting for him was another letter, and he saw that it was from Leslie.

He opened it, almost nervously.

"DEAR SIR: I shall leave Galveston on the steamer *Lone Star*, and expect to arrive in New York on Monday morning, the seventeenth. Your sincere nephew,  
LESLIE NORTON."

Peter read the letter.

"Monday morning, the seventeenth. Why, bless me, this is Monday evening. Will he come here, or does he expect me to meet him?"

He was almost nervous all that evening; every footstep startled him.

He was eager to see his nephew, and perhaps more so because he had parted with his own brother in anger.

But night came, and all retired to rest, save Peter, and he sat down in his old-fashioned chair, in his quaint room, and meditated.

There was a glimmer of moonlight bursting through the small, diamond panes of the windows, and casting strange, weird shadows on the floor.

Peter sat very still.

He had fallen asleep, and in his sleep he was dreaming.

He saw again Paul Norton, Leslie's father, and sweet Annie Leslie; then his visions vanished, and he saw Leslie, bruised and battered out of all semblance to human form.

He started up from his sleep.

"Who is that?" he asked, gazing around, but seeing no one.

He had fancied some one had been in the room.

He walked to the window; it was securely fastened; he examined the doors, and they were just as he had left them.

But his private desk was open.

He knew it had been fastened when he sat down and fell asleep.

Who could have tampered with it?

The old recluse was not suspicious; he reasoned the thing out in his own mind, and charitably supposed that he had opened the desk in his sleep.

He was about to close it, when his eyes fell on a package of papers which he knew had been carefully locked away.

His wills, deeds of the estate, and various other important documents, were in the package.

How came they on the desk?

Had he removed them in his sleep?

He did not think it probable, and yet how else could they have been taken from their secret hiding place?

He replaced them, locked his desk, and once more sat down to sleep.

A strange fancy possessed him that it would be better for him to remain in the library—why, he could not tell.

An hour or more had passed, and Peter Norton slept as soundly as a child.

Had he been awake, he would have seen the door open slightly, and then a little wider.

He would have seen a ghost-like figure, inasmuch as it was habited in white, move across the floor and cautiously open the desk.

But Peter slept, and so did not see the midnight visitant.

Again he dreamed, and thought he saw Leslie drowning.

In his sleep he stretched out his hand.

The visitor saw it, and feared detection.

With silent but rapid steps the white-robed intruder left the room, and when Peter awoke again he saw the desk wide open, though he was positive he had closed it, and the key was in his pocket!

For the first time in his life, he was troubled with superstitious thoughts.

## CHAPTER V.

### GOOD OR EVIL—WHICH?

"The *Lone Star* is wrecked."

"Wrecked?"

"Yes, sir. She was within sight of land, and only a few hours from New York, when she was driven ashore on the Jersey coast."

"Many lost?"

"No, sir; only one missing."

The dialogue took place in the New York office of the steamship company, between Moore Burnett and the clerk of the line.

Moore had been sent by his uncle to make inquiries concerning Leslie, and the first intimation of the wreck was received in the manner we have narrated.

"You say there is one person missing?" asked Moore.

"Yes, sir, a passenger. He was on board at the time of the wreck, but when the life-savers rescued the others he could not be found."

"What was his name?"

"Mr. Norton—Leslie Norton, sir."

"My cousin!"

"Indeed, sir! Then I am sorry. But the company has done everything possible."

"I am sure of that. Where can I get full particulars?"



"We can tell you everything. But perhaps it would be a satisfaction to see the life-savers, and view the wreck."

"I should like to do so very much."

The clerk gave Moore a permit to visit the wreck, and also a letter to the captain of the *Lone Star*, who, after making his report, had returned to superintend the removal of the cargo from the grounded steamer.

Moore sent a telegram to his uncle, couched in the vaguest terms, and then took a seat in a parlor car, *en route* to the scene of the wreck.

Moore's nature was a strange one.

He would not ill-use a horse or a dog, would go a mile out of his way to aid or succor a dumb animal, but did not hesitate to inflict pain, either mental or physical, on a human being.

If he had any feeling in the matter at all, it was one rather of pleasure than pain, for a possible rival had been got rid of, and his uncle's wealth would be divided into only two, instead of three, parts.

When he arrived at the nearest railroad depot to the place of the wreck, he inquired if he could hire a horse.

He delighted in horsemanship, and could ride across country as well as any English squire who had followed the hounds all his life.

Having secured a steed, he rode toward the beach.

On his way he determined not to make his identity known, but to obtain all the information he could.

He made his way to Life-Saving Station No. 4, and found the crew ready to gossip about the wreck.

"Mercy on us, sir!" said one of the men, "the young gent is missing, but what of that? He'll turn up somewhere."

"You think so?"

"In course I do. Now, you know, he wasn't washed out to sea."

"I do not know that. Why do you think it impossible?"

"The wind was blowing thirty-six miles an hour from the sea. A body that could force its way out against that wind couldn't be human."

"But the young man was not washed ashore."

"Wasn't he?"

"I have been told he has not been found, neither has he communicated with any of his friends."

"See here, sir, I guess you're a reporter, or something of that kind; if he had been killed, his body would have been found; no one wants a dead 'un on their hands."

Moore thanked the man in a very substantial fashion for his information, and rode along the shore to the next station.

He rode very slowly, for he wanted to think.

His thoughts were not good ones.

Two spirits, one of good and the other of evil, were contending for the mastery over his soul.

The good suggested that he should offer a reward at once, and even employ a detective to visit all the houses along the shore where it might be possible Leslie could have wandered.

The evil prompted him to return home, and declare his cousin dead, beyond all doubt.

"Even if he does return," suggested the evil spirit, "he could not prove his identity. His brain would be affected, and no one would believe him."

Fortunately, perhaps, the next life-saving station was reached before the victory was gained by the evil prompter.

At this station Moore revealed himself and admitted his identity.

He felt compelled to do so, seeing that the steamship people

had given him letters of introduction, and would make inquiries concerning his visit.

He was received in a friendly manner by the captain of the steamer and the life-savers, but could learn nothing more about Leslie.

But his personal baggage, consisting of one small trunk, was given over to Moore Burnett, who arranged for its transmission to Knowlhurst.

Moore Burnett rode leisurely away from the coast, and returned the horse to its stable.

After supper at the only hotel the place possessed, he started out for a long walk along the sands.

Strange stories had been often told of the lawlessness of some of the residents of that part of the Jersey coast, but Moore was no coward.

He was now really anxious to learn something about his cousin, for, after reflection, he had almost come to the conclusion that honesty is the best policy.

He had heard of wreckers, not those who make their living by saving property on a wrecked ship, but men who, by false lights, would lure a vessel on a dangerous rock or treacherous sandbar, but never did he believe such creatures could exist in these days.

He was even warned by the hotel-keeper not to be too venturesome.

Moore walked on, still facing toward the sea, though at times he wished he was back again in the hotel.

"I'll stay at the station to-night," he said, somewhat emphatically, as the lonesomeness of the walk grew upon him.

It was nearer to the beach than to the village, and, buttoning his coat all the way down and turning up his collar, he walked a little quicker, and whistled to keep up his courage.

He saw some lights in the distance, and at once conjectured that they belonged to the life-saving station.

Turning from the road to take a short cut to the lights, he was surprised to hear some men talking.

They were close to him, and yet he had not before noticed them.

"They'll offer a reward for him, I should say," said one of the men.

"Dead or alive?"

"Aye. Why not? Them kind o' folks like to have their dead close to 'em."

"But is he dead?"

"Don'tee be a fule! How can I tell?"

"'Sh! A bloke is nigh to us."

The conversation ceased, and Moore overtook the two men, and was passing, when one asked him if he had a match.

With an appearance of politeness, Moore drew a silver match-case, and was opening it, when one of the men seized it suddenly.

"I can open that as well as you, guv'nor. P'rhaps you've got a cigar to go with the match?"

"No, I have no cigar. When you have taken a match, I'll thank you for the case."

"Will yer, now?"

"Possession is everything, guv'nor."

"It is a good deal," answered Moore, maintaining an appearance of unconcern, and hoping that some of the life-savers might come that way, and rescue him from a very unpleasant predicament.

"You were talking about some body you had found," suggested Moore.

"Was I?"



"I thought so; now, I am looking for a young man who is missing."

"Are you?"

"Yes; and I fancy there will be a good reward offered for him."

"Shouldn't wonder."

"I'll thank you for the case."

"Case?"

"Match-case."

"Oh! An' would you want to cheat a poor man out of the reward?"

"No; I should be pleased to see that the finder was paid."

"Really?"

"Truly."

"Then, if I find the young man, I'll let yer know. Give us yer address, guv'nor."

"Give me that match-safe."

"Not if I knows it."

Moore was desperate.

He knew that he was weak compared to one of the men, but what power had he against two?

Still, he possessed that bulldog courage that would cause him to prefer to die fighting rather than to live a coward.

He had gradually worked his hand down to his hip pocket, and before the ruffians knew what he was doing, he had the shining barrel of a revolver close to their faces.

"Now, give me that case!"

The man who held it handed it over very slowly to Moore, who never lowered his revolver.

Just as Moore took the match-safe, the other ruffian put out his foot, and with a quick movement tripped him up, and at the same time the revolver went off accidentally.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SMUGGLERS.

Just before sunrise on the morning when the last passenger had been safely landed from the wrecked steamer, *Lone Star*, a boat grated on the sand three miles south of the wreck.

Three men stepped from the boat to the beach, and grumbled and swore all the time.

They lifted a heavy barrel from the boat, and rolled it some distance up the sand.

Then they returned, and a second barrel was served the same way.

The fog was spoken of in no complimentary language, and one, who seemed to be in command, wished they had stayed on board the schooner, which was about half a mile from the beach.

It was a strange place to land anything, but perhaps the location had been carefully selected.

When the two barrels were stood up on end, far enough away to prevent old Neptune washing them back again, one of the men gave a peculiar cry, which cut through the foggy air far better than any articulated words would have done.

The three listened intently for some minutes, but heard no answering sound.

"Better go over to the old hulk, Bill," said the leader; and Bill, still grumbling and shivering, started on his journey.

The old hulk was a portion of a vessel which had been wrecked more than a generation before, and which would have been carried away, piecemeal, for firewood, had there not been a suspicion that it was haunted.

There was no physical research society to investigate the strange idea, and even the Spiritists did not care to inquire too closely,

so all accepted them as being true, and the hulk was saved. Now, it was to this very old hulk that Bill, the mysterious sailor, was ordered to go.

Bill was a grumbler, and had a very bad habit of talking to himself, not always inaudibly.

"Confound the fog! If it hadn't been for it, we'd have been away afore this."

"Didn't it blow all night! Mercy on us! But if we'd been a bit farther north, we'd have had no chance. Then rocks would make the sea so bad that the schooner couldn't have lived. Guess some boat would go to pieces. Well, it ain't our funeral, so—What's that?"

The question was uttered aloud, and was caused by the sudden appearance of a man.

"Is that you, Bill? I guess I know your voice."

"Tom?"

"Ay, ay, Tom it is."

"Then why didn't you answer?"

"Didn't hear it."

"Were you deaf?"

"I watched all night, an' hand't it been for some Jamaica I'd ha' been frozen stiff."

"Fell asleep?"

"No, I didn't fall asleep. What cheer, Bill?"

"Two barrels."

"Is that all?"

"No, it ain't all."

"Then, why—"

"See here, Bill, the skipper says the risk's too great, unless you pays up—pay for the two, an' there may be two more."

"I'll pay for all."

"When?"

"Now. I'll pay for four or six, if you have them."

"All right. Come along, then."

"When can the others be landed?"

"Right away."

The two men walked along the sand until they reached the place where the two barrels were guarded by the other sailors.

The skipper's mate handed Tom a slip of paper on which were some figures.

Tom looked at them keenly for a minute; then, without a word, counted out a number of greasy greenbacks.

The amount was satisfactory, and the mate asked if Tom wanted two more barrels.

The answer was in the affirmative, and the mate entered the boat alone, leaving the other two to assist in rolling the barrels along the sand.

No words were spoken, but the men pushed the barrels as noiselessly as possible, for our readers will have judged that Tom was a purchaser of smuggled spirits, and that the barrels contained good old Jamaica rum, upon which two dollars for each and every gallon therein contained should be paid to Uncle Sam in the shape of duty.

The barrels were rolled to the old hulk, and a door was opened in the side, through which they were thrust.

The sun had just managed to break through the darkness of the fog, when the fourth barrel was deposited in the hulk, and Bill had started to a store, about a quarter of a mile up the sand, to purchase a few things wanted for his ship.

But he had another motive. If his boat had been seen to land, it might be necessary to have some excuse for being ashore, and the provisions he would carry back would provide one.

His companions were waiting for him, seated in the boat, and smoking as innocently as though smuggling had never been heard



of by any of them. Bill had resumed his grumbling, and was in no pleasant mood.

He was within sight of the boat, when an object attracted his attention.

"By the sun, moon and stars!" he exclaimed, "it's a stiff!"

He deviated from the straight course to where he saw, or fancied he saw, the dead body.

There was money in the discovery of a body washed up by the sea, and Bill wanted all he could get.

"Bill!"

"Bill, where are you going?"

"Come here!" Bill responded.

"What is it?"

"A stiff!"

The mate and the other sailors walked leisurely to where Bill was bending over the body of a young man.

"He ain't dead!" he mate ejaculated.

"What shall we do?"

"Leave him."

"To die?" asked Bill.

"It ain't our bizness."

"I'll stay with him."

"You fool! The revenue officers will be along soon!"

"Then let us take the chap with us?"

Seeing that Bill's humanitarian feelings were aroused, the others thought it best to humor him, so they lifted the unconscious body and laid it in the bottom of the boat.

The men plied themselves to the oars, and very quickly the shore of New Jersey faded from sight, and the schooner was on its way to the island of Jamaica.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LESLIE'S NEW HOME.

The *Saucy Mary* was a trim-built vessel, and could stand the roughest gales and defy the fiercest seas.

Smuggling was not the skipper's main reliance—it was only a side issue indulged in by the skipper and crew for a little extra pocket money.

The skipper being part owner, and having a roving commission, had splendid facilities for defrauding the revenue of the United States Government.

All that day and night the seas were heavy, and the wind blew big guns.

The body found on the beach had been forgotten after the first hour on board.

During that hour the crew had tried several means to restore life to the nearly dead body.

They rolled him, stomach downward, over a barrel; then they pumped air into his lungs by means of a pair of bellows; and, when those things failed, they placed the young man in a hammock, covered him with a couple of heavy blankets, and, forcing open his teeth, poured nearly half a pint of strong rum down his throat.

Then they left him.

"If he croaks" (dies) "good rum will ha' been wasted," said one of the men, to which Bill responded:

"If he croaks, I'll pay your share of the rum."

All night the fury of the electric storm continued, and the rescued one still stayed in the hammock, alone and uncared for.

It was morning before any of the men could turn in, and Bill, who had given up his hammock to the young man, descended with the first men to rest.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of the

pale, white face in the hammock. "Well, I'm blessed! If I didn't go an' forget all about you!"

He passed his hand over the white face, and was pleased to find it warm.

"Wake up, young 'un! I'm pretty well sure you've had your share of sleep."

The eyes opened, and rested on Bill.

"Where am I?"

"Well, I'm blessed! Can't you see that you're in a hammock?"

"A hammock?"

"Yes; did you never see one afore?"

"But how it rocks!"

"Guess you're about right; we've had it purty rough."

"My head aches."

"Does it? Slept too much, p'rhaps. What is your name?"

"My name?"

"That is just what I said."

The youth raised his head and looked around the room, in which several hammocks were slung.

"I never saw this place before."

"Didn't you? Well, that's strange, now, isn't it?"

"I—thought— It must have been a dream—"

"Guess you are right; but what was it? I'm fond of dreams."

"I thought I was on deck, and a great wave washed over the deck and carried me over the side, and I fell into the water."

"Well, you may have dreamed it, or you may have experienced it; anyhow, you're on the good schooner *Saucy Mary*—"

"What name?"

"*Saucy Mary*."

"Where is the *Saucy Mary* going?"

"If the wind holds fair, Jamaica will be our port."

"I want to get to New York."

"Well, I'm blessed! I find you asleep an' half dead on the Jersey coast; I bring you on board the finest schooner that ever sailed the seas, an' you go for to be discontented, an' want to go to New York."

"I do."

"P'rhaps if the skipper knew, he'd turn back an' land you at New York. Shall I ask him? What's your name?"

"Name?"

"Yes; ain't you got none?"

"I—yes—I had—but my head aches so I do not remember."

Bill was getting very sleepy, and as he had started smoking some very strong tobacco, his long vigil and the narcotic influence of the weed combined to send him to sleep, and he was soon snoring in a very musical manner.

For three days the waif of the ocean lay in a kind of stupor.

His memory seemed to have entirely deserted him.

"What shall we do with him?" the skipper asked when the *Saucy Mary* was within sight of Jamaica.

Turn him over to the authorities," answered Bill.

"Likely thing, and be obliged to bring him back. We ought never to have touched him."

"Guess you're right, but I hated to see a chap die right afore one's eyes."

"That's right, but a pretty mess we've got into."

"I have it."

"What?"

"An idea."

"No, I speaks as I think. What's your idea?"

"Sam."

"Ha, ha, ha! Sam is a pretty tangible idea."

"Sam's wife keeps a store. Leave the chap there until he gets



his memory, then he'll soon begin to talk, and the American consul will send him home."

"Good as far as it goes; but why should Sam's wife keep a strapping lad—almost a man? And why should she say that it wasn't the *Saucy Jane* what kidnaped him?"

"I'll give her something for her trouble, and she'll never say a word; 'sides, he'll be useful to her."

Sam was interviewed, and he agreed to the proposition; so, when the schooner was safely anchored at the dock, Bill accompanied Sam to his home.

Over the door of a general store on Eyre Street was the inscription:

"SARAH MELSHAM,  
General Dealer,"

and into the store the two men went.

Sam kissed his wife and little ones, and Bill was warmly welcomed. It was Bill who told the story of the waif, and kind-hearted Sarah Melsham volunteered to look after the boy.

"I'd do anything for an American," she said; and then, as though by way of apology, she added: "You know I'm American myself, and my brother talks of coming out here before long."

So the rescued waif, whose head had been badly bruised by the waters and exposure, was transferred to the care of Sarah Melsham.

He was strong and hearty, and a doctor declared he would soon outgrow his mental trouble.

In the meantime he was very useful to Mrs. Melsham, and she often declared he was worth his weight in gold to her.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AIR-SHIPS.

Leaving Jamaica, with its palms and tropical plants, behind us, and even bridging over the time which has elapsed, we return to the sands of New Jersey, and find ourselves once more in the presence of Moore Burnett.

When we left him he had received back his silver match-safe, and had drawn his revolver; but his antagonists were too quick for him, and he was tripped up, falling violently on his back.

His head struck a stone, and a nasty gash was inflicted.

The men had no desire to add murder to their other crimes, so were somewhat sobered when they found the blood trickle over their hands.

The report of the pistol shot might have been heard by some one. Anyway, some men were approaching, and suspicion must be averted.

Jake shouted loudly:

"Help!"

"Where away?"

"Right here to the south'ard."

One of the life-savers was on his way to the village, and heard the pistol-shot.

When he arrived to the place where Moore was lying, the two men were panting and breathless.

"We heard the shot an' ran," explained Jake.

The life-saver stooped down and raised Moore's head.

He saw the gash, and also discovered the sharp stone which had inflicted the wound.

"Will you help carry him to the station?" asked the saver.

"Sure an' why shouldn't we? Poor chap, he had a nasty fall."

Between them they carried Moore to the station, where the captain attended to him, bathed his wound and treated him as well as could a doctor.

He told the captain the conversation he had overheard, but was careful not to implicate the men in any way in his account of his accident.

The next day the whole neighborhood was thoroughly searched, and a reward of one hundred dollars offered for the discovery of the body of Leslie Norton.

Nothing further could be done, and Moore returned, with his sad tale, to Knowlthurst.

Peter Norton was almost heart-broken when he heard of the loss of his nephew.

Eleanor grieved very sincerely, though, of course, she had never known Leslie.

She was riding with Moore one afternoon soon after he returned, when suddenly she asked him if he thought their uncle was failing.

"No, Nelly, he is as strong as most men of forty. Why do you ask?"

"While you were away he talked quite a good deal about the uncertainty of life, and made a new will."

"Made a new will?"

"Yes; he said he had been unjust."

"To whom?"

"Leslie Norton, I suppose. Who else could he mean?"

"Do you think that—uncle——"

Moore paused.

He hardly liked to ask that sweet cousin of his what she thought of her uncle's disposition of his property.

"Uncle wants to be just," she answered.

"Then you think that this Leslie would have had an equal share?"

"Yes, poor Leslie."

"He is dead, there is no doubt about that, so, as we never knew him, why bother ourselves about him?"

"It seems cruel."

"Of course; did I not do all I could? Did I not get almost killed over the fellow?"

"I know it, Moore; you acted bravely."

Moore took all credit to himself, but he did not tell his uncle or Eleanor that he had offered the suspicious characters around the beach a larger reward if they would communicate first tidings to him, should anything be heard of his cousin.

For, though openly Moore sought for Leslie, secretly he resolved that the cousin should never enter Knowlthurst, if he could help it.

"Uncle wants you to help him with his flying ship."

"Does he? What a pile of money he wastes over it."

"Yes, but the money is his own."

"Is it?"

"Of course; how strange you talk, Moore."

"Do I?"

"Yes; I do not like to hear it."

"Then I'll talk differently, for I want to please you, dear."

"What did you mean by saying 'is it?' when I spoke of uncle's money?"

Moore laughed at her eagerness in asking.

"Why, dearie, only this: The world thinks uncle insane, or at least a crank; if I were to raise my hand, the State would step in and declare him incapable of managing his property."

"Moore, for shame! How can you talk like that? Hush, here is uncle."

The cousins had entered the gate, and Peter expressed his pleasure at meeting them.

"Moore, I want you in my workshop, and you, too, Nelly, when you have put up your horses."



The cousins looked at each other significantly, and smiled.

A few minutes later they entered the workroom.

Over a clock at one end stood a gilded skull, which looked more than ordinarily hideous, because in the hollow sockets of its eyes were placed blue glasses, through which in the day the sunlight passed, and at night the rays of a lamp gave a ghastly appearance to the orbs.

Several peculiar-looking balloons and frames stood down the center of the floor, and on the walls were diagrams and pictures of air-ships innumerable.

"I think I have solved the problem at last," exclaimed the old man, his eyes flashing with enthusiasm as he spoke.

"I hope so, uncle, for you are very persevering."

"Thank you, Nelly, for your wish. Now, I want to talk with you both, for you know something of aeronautics, through your studies in this room. Hitherto balloons have been made of big bags, filled with gas or rarefied air.

"But balloons have had no practical use, because they could not be navigated.

"My idea is to have artificial wings made of feathers. Each tube of the feather to be filled with gas, so that, instead of one big bag of gas, I will have a thousand small tubes filled. These wings, as I operate them, will lift four or five hundred pounds, and as I shall have a tail for steering, I shall be able to go any way I please."

"Poor uncle!" murmured Eleanor, softly.

"Uncle is daft," said Moore, boldly, trusting Peter Norton would not hear him.

For upward of an hour the eccentric old man lectured the cousins on the science of his flying machine, and as he talked his enthusiasm became intense.

As the cousins returned to the house, even Eleanor felt that Peter Norton was getting into his dotage, and becoming almost insane.

Moore had dark thoughts in his mind—thoughts which he would not mention to Eleanor.

Had he given them utterance they would have been startling.

"I will see his will," he thought, "and if I am not well treated I will set the doctors to work, for he is as mad as a March hare."

The house was all silent, for the hour of midnight had passed.

A white-robed figure crept cautiously down the stairs and entered the library.

The faint glimmer of light from the candle he carried showed the features of Moore Burnett.

He reached his uncle's desk, and with trembling hands fitted a key into the lock and opened it.

He searched among the papers for the latest will his uncle had made, but could not find it.

He opened drawer after drawer, but still without avail.

He arose up to close the desk, when a piercing scream startled him, and dropping the candle he fled from the library.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MYSTERY STILL UNSOLVED.

The scream rang through the house.

It seemed to find its way into every nook and corner.

Peter Norton heard it, and thought some one was trying to steal his flying machine and had been discovered.

Eleanor Loring heard it, and shivered; but she did not, like many, cover her head with the bed-clothes, but quickly robed her form in a dressing-gown, and prepared to search for the daring marauder.

Peter Norton was the first out of his room, and Nelly made a good second.

"Did you hear it, Nelly?"

"Yes, uncle. Where was it?"

"Workroom, I think."

"Library, I fancied."

"We will go to the workroom first. Do you know there are many who would scarcely stop at crime in order that they might find out my secret."

"Where is Moore?" asked Nelly, feeling surprised that he had not emerged from his room.

The door cautiously opened, and Moore stepped into the hall.

"Then it was not a dream?" he said, rubbing his eyes, as though just awakened from his sleep.

"A dream?"

"Yes, uncle; I fancied I must have had nightmare."

The three wended their way to the workshop.

The workshop was undisturbed, the door was locked, the windows secured, and the skull still in its place, looking down on the midnight intruders as though they had no right in the domain of darkness.

"It is strange," murmured Peter.

"I wonder where madam is?" thought Nelly, and in sympathy Peter uttered the same thought aloud.

"Ah, perhaps the scream came from her!" suggested Moore.

"Why did we not think of that? She may be murdered!"

"Uncle, why? Madam Dupont has not an enemy in the world."

"Perhaps not, but let us go to her room."

Nelly took the lead in the new direction, and knocked on the madam's door.

There was no response.

"Knock again," suggested Moore.

But Nelly did not. She opened the door, and saw that the bed was unoccupied.

Madam Dupont's clothes were on a chair at the foot of the bed, but she was nowhere to be found.

"This is a mystery, Nelly. Let us go to the library."

As soon as the door was opened Peter called out:

"Burglars!"

Not that he saw any of that large family of uninvited guests present, but he did see that his desk was open and his papers disarranged.

But Nelly saw something which made her shiver with fear.

On the floor in the corner near the shield of weapons the well-known form of Madam Dupont lay stretched on the floor.

Nelly caught her uncle's arm.

"See!"

"Great heaven! murdered!"

Moore went across to the madam and lifted her head.

"Not dead, uncle, but——"

"What? Is she wounded? Is she dying?"

"No, uncle; I think she has partaken too liberally of your old wine."

"Shame on you, Moore Burnett! How dare you slander that estimable woman?"

Peter Norton was thoroughly aroused by Moore's insinuation, and soon satisfied himself that the suspicion was unfounded.

Madam Dupont heard the voices and opened her eyes.

She did not at once realize where she was; but when she looked down at her bare feet and her night-robe, and then saw Peter Norton and Moore Burnett standing by, and even touching her, she screamed, just as she had done before.

"Has he gone? Did he take everything?" she asked.

"Who gone?"



"I—thought——"

She rubbed her eyes and was silent for a moment.

"Forgive me, I don't know what it means," she said, when she had collected her scattered senses.

"How came you here?" asked Peter.

"I dreamed that you were being robbed. It was all a dream; and in my dream I thought I followed the burglar to the library, and that he struck me and I fell. I thought I screamed, and the burglar fled through the window. It was all a dream."

"I don't think so, madam."

"You don't?"

"No. Some human being has tampered with my desk."

"You don't think——" Madam Dupont commenced.

"No. I believe you actually saw in your sleep that an attempt at robbery was to be made, and in your sleep you came here and disturbed the thief."

"Thank you, sir. I know nothing of the reality. I have told you my dream."

Moore laughed.

"There has been no burglar here, uncle."

"Indeed! Then how came my desk opened, and my papers scattered about?"

"Perhaps madam dreamed she did it," sneered Moore.

"No, sir. If Madam Dupont is a dreamer and a sleepwalker, she is no idiot—pardon me, madam, for the expression. Whoever opened my desk carried a candle and dropped the china candlestick. See, here are the pieces. Madam Dupont's candle is close to where she fell."

A slight flush suffused itself over Moore's face, but otherwise he was calm.

"I acknowledge my suspicions were wrong, sir, but it seemed so strange that Madam Dupont should dream——"

"Perhaps, Master Moore, you may dream yourself some day," answered the madam, who was not overfond of the dashing but wild young nephew of the house.

"I think we had better go to bed," suggested Peter. "Evidently no one is concealed here."

Leading the way to the staircase as he spoke, Peter stood, like an old-time knight, to allow all to precede him.

He closely followed and entered his own room.

He did not close his door, but waited near it until all was still and silent in the house.

He had heard the different doors lock, and knew that all had retired.

Cautiously he descended the stairs to the library, and closed the door after him.

He examined the desk.

"Opened with a key. Now, who has one?" he asked himself, and no answer was needed, for he prided himself on the knowledge that there was but one key in the universe that would fit the desk lock, and that key was in his room without a doubt.

There was no need to consider whether he had locked the desk, for it fastened with a spring, and therefore the mystery was the greater.

"Three times I have found that desk opened," he muttered to himself. "Who can have done it? And what did the madam want in the library, clad only in her nightdress?"

He examined the papers which had been disturbed, and quickly saw that none were missing.

Locking the desk once more, he retired to his room and was soon fast asleep.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ECCENTRIC VISITOR.

A short, stout man waddled up the carriage drive to Knowl-hurst.

By the side of the carriage-way was a plank sidewalk, but that did not seem wide enough for the visitor.

He walked very strangely, his feet wide apart, and his appearance was so singular that Moore called Nelly's attention to him.

"Who can he be?" she asked.

"Some crank my uncle has picked up, I suppose."

"By Jove! he looks like an old salt. I'll board his craft, see if I don't. Avast there, shipmate!" shouted Moore.

The stout man stopped, took off his hat, wiped the perspiration from his brow, for although the weather was cold, the exertion of walking made him hot.

"Avast there!"

"What is it, young landsman?" asked the stranger.

"Where are you going?"

"That is just the question I expected you to ask. Tell me, who lives in yonder house?"

"Who is it you want to see?" asked Moore.

"An old man called Norton."

"I thought so. What do you want with him?"

"Is he fond of orchids?"

"Have you any specimens for sale?"

"I asked you a question, young sir, but as you do not seem inclined to answer I'll ask this young lady."

Eleanor had joined them as he spoke, and he doffed his hat and bowed so low that Nelly thought he would overbalance himself and fall on his head.

"What do you wish to ask me, sir?"

"Is Mr. Norton fond of orchids?"

"Very."

"In fact, he makes a hobby of them?"

"He is a great cultivator of them."

"Good, good, very good. Is he at home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, miss. I'll go and see him."

"You are a seaman, are you not?" asked Moore.

"'Tis true, and pity 'tis, 'tis true,' as you read sometimes in the newspapers."

"Do you wish to talk about the sea, or orchids, or flying machines to my uncle, sir?"

"To your uncle?"

"Yes, I am Peter Norton's nephew."

"Is that a fact?"

"It is; and as his nephew, I ask on what business you wish to see him."

"I hardly know yet. I must see him first; you see, to be candid with you, Miss Norton——"

"Loring, my name is, sir."

"Oh, then you are not this young man's sister?"

"No, I am his cousin."

"And my name is Burnett—Moore Burnett."

"Glad to know it, sir. I may talk on all three subjects to your most worthy uncle—that is, if I like him."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Moore, as the strange visitor bowed low and walked toward the house, "by Jove! he's a bigger crank than uncle."

Peter Norton saw the strange visitor approach, and was attracted to him at once.

He even opened the door and welcomed him.

"Have I the honor of addressing the Honorable Peter Norton,



whose orchids are the finest in the world and whose flying machine is a wonderful invention?"

"I am Peter Norton."

"I have traveled eight hundred miles merely to see you."

"Have you, really? Come in."

The eccentric stranger entered the library, and could not restrain his surprise.

After Peter Norton had given his visitor, whose name he did not know, a full history of the place, he suddenly asked:

"Why did you come to see me?"

"You are fond of orchids?"

"I am, yes—very. I pride myself on having some of the finest specimens in the whole of the Northern States."

"By gosh! that is just what I heard; but you have a flying machine as well, have you not?"

"'Fame travels fast,' as Shakespeare says. I often think," continued the eccentric visitor, pausing after the word, as though the sentence was ended. "I often think that the old Romans were right when they said: '*Fama nihil est celerius.*'"

"My dear sir, you flatter me."

"I do not intend to do so. I think you have a charming family; I met your nephew and niece. Have you any other interesting relatives?"

"I had a brother, who was killed——"

"Where?"

"In Texas."

"Ah! Had he any children?"

Peter looked at his questioner closely, but could detect no eagerness in his manner, nothing to show he was interested beyond ordinary curiosity.

"He had a son——"

"Leslie Norton?"

The mention of the name was like the explosion of a bomb, or a sudden descent of a thunderbolt.

"What do you know of him? You are not——"

"No, I am not Leslie Norton. I came to speak about him."

"You knew him?"

"I did."

"Where? In Texas?"

"Partly; that is to say—I—well, to be candid about the matter, I was quartermaster on board the *Lone Star* steamship from Galveston to New York."

Peter held up his hand as if he would ask for silence.

His face flushed and paled alternately. It was easy to see that he was affected.

"Where is he? Is he dead?" he asked, after the first paroxysm of emotion had passed.

"I do not think so. To go back to the *Lone Star*. Leslie, forgive me for not being more formal, told me his story. 'I have not a friend in the world,' he said; 'I am only going to my uncle because of a promise I made to my mother.' These were his words. Then he told me how eccentric his uncle was, all about your orchids and flying machine; that was why I asked about them; I wanted to be sure I had cast anchor in the right port."

"But I loved the lad——"

"He did not know it, if you did, for he said he was not at all sure that you would even ask him to have dinner when he came."

Nelson told all he knew of the wreck and the disappearance of the youth.

"Why do you think he is not dead?"

"The sea gives up its dead. The wind was blowing big guns, and from the sea, too, so his body must be washed ashore, but it has never been seen. But why does that other nephew dislike Leslie?"

"Dislike him? What gave you that idea?"

"He did."

"When? What did he say?"

"To me, nothing. But he went around among smugglers and fishermen, and gave them an address, saying he would give extra money if they would let him know privately if the body was found."

"That was to enable him to break the shock to me."

"Of course, of course! So he gave an assumed name and—— But, of course, it is as you say. I'm glad I've seen you. I liked Leslie; he was as good as any mortal could be, and 'as true as the stars that are shining,' as the Sunday school hymn says."

The sailor took his hat and arose to leave, but Peter gently placed his hands on Nelson's shoulders and pushed him back in his chair.

"No, no, no! You must be my guest to-day, and as long as you like to stay."

"But, sir, I leave for Jamaica the day after to-morrow."

"Then you can stay till to-morrow with us. Do so."

"On one condition, I accept."

"And that?"

"That you do not say a word, before others, about the *Lone Star*, or my having met Leslie. Talk about orchids or flying machines if you like."

"It shall be as you say."

## CHAPTER XI.

### "DICK, THE WAIF."

Sarah Melsham was as loyal an American as ever lived.

Although living under the English flag, she had the Stars and Stripes ready for any American holiday, and the good people of Jamaica were sure to know that the citizens of the United States were celebrating some event when they passed her general store and saw the starry banner hanging out of her bedroom window.

It was because the waif brought to her by her husband was an American that she took to him.

Poor fellow! No one would have recognized in "Dick," as Sarah Melsham called him, the sprightly, dashing youth we introduced to our readers as Leslie Norton.

Yet it was true.

Leslie, injured by the waves when he was dashed on shore, had lost his memory, and was but a poor, mental wreck.

Anything he was told to do he did willingly and conscientiously, but an hour afterward he had forgotten all about it.

Sarah would have given half her possessions if by that sacrifice Dick could be restored to mental health; but the local doctor decided that he was an imbecile, and would always remain so.

One day she glanced over the society columns of the *Jamaica Register*, and actually read the account of a reception given to a distinguished scientist by his excellency the governor.

The scientist was an American; she had never heard of him before, but the paper said he was one of the greatest experts on brain diseases in the world.

Sarah Melsham read every word of the report, then commenced right over again.

"I will go and see him. I am an American."

Attired like Joseph of old, in a dress of many colors, she sallied forth to the Royal Hotel and asked to see the great scientist.

The door-porter referred to the clerk, who questioned Sarah and found her very obstinate and determined.

He learned the lesson that:

"When a woman will, or won't, depend on't;  
If she will do't, she will, and there's an end on't."



So, with as much courtesy as he could command, he begged Sarah to be seated, and he would see Dr. Allan Welland and learn his pleasure.

"Tell him I'm an American, sir."

"I thought so," muttered the clerk, as he left her presence.

In a very few minutes the bell-boy crossed the hall and bade Sarah follow him.

She was ushered into the presence of the great expert, and bowed with almost fashionable grace.

"Well, madam, I understand you wish to see me?"

"I do. I know, as you are an America, you will do a kindly act for one of your own countrymen."

"Your husband?"

"Lor' bless you, no, sir. It's a waif."

"A what?"

"A waif washed up by the sea, sir."

"I don't understand you, madam. Be seated and explain. My time is very limited; I promised to meet the governor in just a quarter of an hour."

If Dr. Welland had said he could give her all day in which to explain the case, the probabilities are that she would have exhausted herself in five minutes; but the short time so confused her, that she rambled off into her own history, and how she had a brother on an American steamer, and a husband on a tramp.

"But the patient——"

"Oh, yes, he is very patient. He is the nicest fellow, is Dick, that ever played with children. He can tell them Mother Goose from cover to cover, but he does not know his own name."

Dr. Welland saw that the only way to get an understanding of the case was to ask questions, and limit Sarah to the shortest answers.

As a result, he became so interested that he said he would go with her and see Dick.

They found Dick sitting on the curb, telling in the most solemn language how "A mouse ran up a clock, hickory, dickory dock."

Dr. Welland listened to him, and asked him if he knew Mother Hubbard.

Dick started off at once:

"Old Mother Hubbard,  
She went to the cupboard  
To get the poor dog a bone."

"That will do, I see you know it. How do you like Jamaica?"

"Ginger," added Dick.

"Ever in New York?"

Dick shook his head.

"Philadelphia, Chicago, 'Frisco?" asked the doctor, quickly, but Dick's face was a blank.

"New Orleans?"

The eyes of the boy became a little brighter.

"Galveston?"

Dick tumbled the children off his knees into the gutter, and jumped up.

"Galveston," he repeated. "Yes, I will go home."

Dick entered the house for his cap, and started running down the street, the doctor following closely with Sarah Melsham.

Presently the boy stopped.

"I've lost my way! I've lost my way!" he said, and the tears rolled down his face.

"I think I can cure him."

"God in heaven bless you doctor, for saying it. I'll give you all I possess——"

"Nonsense, woman! I shall cure him for science sake, not for yours."

"I don't care whose sake, doctor, only cure him."

There looked but little hope of a cure being effected, for Dick was again in the gutter with the little ones, and singing to them a simple nursery rhyme.

His eyes were glassy and vacant, and to the ordinary person he appeared to be a hopeless maniac.

## CHAPTER XII.

### "I LOST MY NAME OVERBOARD."

Dr. Allan Welland was devoted to his profession. For it he lived. To him it was not a mere means of making a good income—it was his whole existence. He would have starved, suffered bodily agony, endured tortures, for the sake of his profession.

It was, therefore, the very best thing for "Dick, the Waif," that Welland should visit Jamaica, and equally fortunate that Sarah Melsham should have sufficient confidence, or, as some would call it, cheek, to wait upon the great physician and intercede with him, well knowing that she could not pay him his usual fee.

"I can cure him."

The words acted like a powerful stimulant on Sarah Melsham.

"For God in heaven's sake do so!" she exclaimed, and the next instant she was dancing in the roadway.

Never did Nautch girl execute a greater variety of steps, nor serpentine dancer perform more intricate evolutions than did this overjoyed woman.

Welland may have seen her.

If he did, he took no notice. She was not his patient, and his whole mind was fixed on Dick.

For fully half an hour he watched the youth steadily and anxiously.

Sarah had finished her extemporized terpsichorean exercises, and stood, out of breath, her hands on her hips, looking at the doctor.

"Come inside, madam," he said, as courteously as though he were speaking to a wealthy dame who was prepared to give him a ten-thousand-dollar fee.

"Do you know anything of Galveston?"

"No, sir."

"Can you find any one who does?"

"Lor', sir, loads of 'em down on the docks; that is, if there's any American ships in dock."

"Tell me all you know about Dick."

Sarah was a little calmer than she had been at the hotel, and told all about her husband, and how he had been a coaster, but was now on the *Saucy Mary* as chief mate, and that there wasn't a better judge of rum in all the world.

Dr. Welland had no desire to listen to all this, which had nothing whatever to do with his patient; but he professed to be interested, and even asked her questions about her husband.

"Does Sam, your husband, drink much rum?"

"Lor', no, sir! He is the temperatest man going. But he can tell good rum, and buys it for the captain."

"What has that to do with Sam being chief mate?"

Sarah arose from her chair, went to the store door, looked out, then to the windows, and even looked up the stairs which started from the room in which they were sitting, much as a melodramatic conspirator might do.

Being satisfied that no one was listening, she seated herself again and whispered:

"He gets more pay."

Dr. Welland was more than ever curious, and yet he did not wish to appear obtuse to her.



"Ah, I see," he answered, as though that would settle the matter; but Sarah grew more communicative.

"You don't think any worse of him, do you?"

"Why should I?"

"A man must live, and times are not what they used to be. Now, if only we were in the States, and could see the star-spangled flag over our heads, we should be richer, and then Sam wouldn't have to run the risk of sneaking in with rum."

"Smuggling," suggested the doctor, now beginning to understand more clearly how Sam's knowledge of rum was an advantage."

"That's what some call it, sir; but Sam says it's perfectly square, because if he didn't do it there are plenty that would."

And with that strange moral sentiment, Sarah Melsham closed her long statement about her husband's knowledge of "good old Jamaica."

"Sam had charge of some rum, and sent one of the messmates, Bill, to roll the barrel along the Jersey sand. Ah, doctor, there's nothing would please me better than to be bitten by a genuine Jersey mosquito, and I almost wish I could get a chill; it would remind me of the Hackensack flats, where I was born. As I was saying, Bill had rolled his barrel to the place and was coming back to the *Saucy Mary*, when he saw a dead body."

"A dead body is worth five dollars, you know, sir, so Bill calculated he had time to take the body to the life station, get his five dollars, and reach the *Saucy Mary* in time; but no sooner did he look at the dead body than he saw it wasn't dead. Bill is the tenderest hearted creature living, and so he picks up the body and was going to carry it to the station, when he saw Sam, and says: 'Sam, you've got to get on board, for the revenue men are after us.' That meant the prison for Bill, so he dumps the body in the boat, and there it is."

And Sarah pointed to Dick as she wound up her story.

Dr. Welland had to reason out for himself how Bill's interest in the "dead body" had been transferred to Sam, and whether Sam or Sarah expected to be well paid for looking after the waif.

"Did you ever have a name, my boy?" Welland asked.

"Yes, sir, once, but I lost it."

"Do you remember where?"

Dick thought for a moment and his brow was wrinkled with the perplexity of answering that question.

"I think I dropped it overboard," he replied, quietly and soberly.

"I wonder," mused the doctor, as if speaking to himself, "I wonder if I could catch it if I went fishing from the *Saucy Mary*."

There was no responsive gleam of intelligence as the doctor mentioned the name of the vessel which had brought the waif to the island.

Welland was encouraged, and told Sarah again very emphatically that he would be able to restore Dick's reason.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### "THE HONEST TAR'S FRIGHT."

The steamer bound from New York to Jamaica was within sight of its port, and all was excitement on board.

There was one passenger who felt particularly jolly, our old friend, Quartermaster Nelson.

"Who'd think that I was only going to see my sister Sarah?" he asked himself. "My heart goes pit-a-pat as though I was going to see a sweetheart. But I ain't—it's only Sarah. And I've good news for her. Wonder whether she will be pleased? Let me see; I've got money, and, what is as good, I've got influence. I needn't be quartermaster a day longer; I can be skipper, and I'll offer Sam Melsham a good berth—better than cheating the rev-

enue. Blow me! but I'd take it real hard if Sarah's husband got into the stone jug."

By which expressive synonym he meant prison.

The harbor was reached.

The great vessel swung into her dock as easily as though she were only a small skiff.

The gangplank was lowered and Nelson was one of the first to step ashore.

"Stand by there! I'm in a hurry while the wind blows fair," he ejaculated, as he pushed his way through the crowd.

All sorts and conditions elbowed him, but he had been there before and "knew the ropes," as he told a very persistent dorky, who wanted to carry his bag or show him the way.

But Nelson did not go straight to his sister's house.

He went around the docks and made inquiries when the *Saucy Mary* was last in port, or when she might be expected.

Having satisfied himself, he went to a restaurant, had a good dinner, found a barber's, got "his deck trimmed," as he called it, which meant a clean shave and his hair cut.

Having performed these preliminaries he arranged to leave his bag at the restaurant until he could sent for it, lightened it somewhat by taking therefrom two bottles of good Kentucky rye, and started for Sarah Melsham's house.

"Will she know me? Why shouldn't she? I am older, but so is she. I am cleaner, ay, that's where I made the mistake; I ought to have left on my beard—but what's in a beard? as the philosopher remarks."

Satisfied with himself, he waddled along as fast as he possibly could.

"Plague take the land!" he exclaimed once; "however do people manage to walk on it all the time is what I'd like to know. There's no give to it."

Nelson would persist walking as though he was still treading the deck, and making allowance for the roll of the ship, his foot would come down on the pavement with considerable force, thereby hurting his corns and jarring his whole nervous system.

At last he was at the corner of the street, and puffing, with the exertion of walking, he stopped to take a look about and rest a while.

He could see the store, and noticed some pails piled up on one side of the door, and brooms on the other.

"Same old things! Wonder if she ever sells 'em? Sarah is a rare one for a store. Can't she talk! Hello! What's that?"

The question was evoked by the sight of an American flag being run out of the bedroom window.

"Guess she expects me, then. Say, mate," to a passer-by, "who lives yonder?"

"Sarah Melsham."

"Oh! What's that flag out for?"

"Yankee steamer just in. Sarah allers hoists the flag when a steamer arrives from the States."

"Bless her, she ain't a Britisher yet."

"Britisher, is it? Go and play 'God Save the Queen' in front of the store, and whistle it, either, and you'll see."

Nelson loved a joke as well as any man.

He turned up his collar and walked in the middle of the street until he got opposite the store.

Looking up at the flag, he began in the loudest whistle he could command:

"God save our gracious queen,  
Long live our noble queen—"

"Go away!"

It was Sarah's voice.



"God save the queen,  
Long may she—"

"Go away! Unless you'll whistle 'Yankee Doodle' afterward, then I'll give you six-pence."

But Nelson kept on.

Sarah rushed out of the door.

She again raised her voice:

"My good man, go away!"

She looked at the whistler, almost jumped to where her brother was standing, and threw her arms around his neck, kissing him over and over again.

"When did you come? How are you? Haven't had dinner? Come in; I am so glad to see you."

She did not wait for him to answer her questions, but talked and laughed incessantly.

He had just time to put the two bottles of Kentucky fire-water on the table when Dick entered.

Nelson looked at the poor youth.

His eyes bulged out of their sockets, his face became pale, and as Dick approached him, Nelson, the brave mariner, gave a yell of fright.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"I'LL HELP HIM ALL I CAN."

Sarah did not scream, like many women would have done.

She thought her brother had taken a drop too much, and was not right in his head.

In the rank of life in which she lived such things were of almost daily occurrence; but she was grieved, nevertheless, for Nelson was "the temperatest man in the hull United States," she declared, with becoming emphasis.

"Where is he?" asked Nelson.

"Who?"

"See, there he stands. What is he looking at me for? I didn't drown him. I'd have given my right hand to save him. Wasn't I his best friend on the *Lone Star*?"

"What are you raving about? That is only Dick."

Nelson suffered himself to be composed.

Just here Dick put his hand on his arm.

"So you were saved?"

"Yes, Leslie, my boy."

"That's it. I've found it. Sarah"—he always called Mrs. Melsham by her given name—"Sarah, I've found my name. It is Leslie Norton."

"Of course it is; but how came you here? Sarah, what does it mean?"

Sarah could not answer.

For the very first time in her life she had fainted.

"What does it mean?" asked Nelson.

Dick, or Leslie, as we shall now call him, pointed to Sarah, and the quartermaster tried various expedients to restore her to consciousness.

When she had somewhat recovered, he looked at Leslie, and asked:

"Don't you know me?"

"I have—seen—you—somewhere, but it was in a dream."

"Not much. It was on the deck of the *Lone Star*."

"The *Lone Star*?"

"I—I—think—you—were—the—"

"Quartermaster."

"Yes. Quartermaster Nelson, of the steamer *Lone Star*, Galveston to New York."

"Of course! But, plague take it, how did you get here?"

"I don't know."

Sarah sat staring at the two for some time without saying a word.

As if an inspiration had seized upon her mind, she put on her bonnet and ran through Kingston's streets until she reached the Royal Hotel.

"Doctor, dear doctor, he is getting worse," she cried, as she found Dr. Welland. "There are two of them now."

"Two! what do you mean?"

"My brother; he's off his head. He thinks he knew Dick up in the stars—"

"Drinking?"

"I don't know, sir; he has only just arrived from the States."

"Go right home; I will follow you at once."

She hurried home to find her brother talking quite rationally, and Leslie listening with intelligence.

"How came Leslie here?" asked the quartermaster.

"I know no Leslie; Dick, you perhaps mean."

"My dear Sarah—"

"Sarah my name is Leslie Norton."

"Is it?"

"Yes, and I was wrecked on the coast of New Jersey."

"Who told you so?"

"Quartermaster Nelson, who was wrecked at the same time."

Sarah had not heard of any such mishap, and doubtingly looked at her brother.

She was pitying him, but a new thought arose in her mind.

Perhaps Nelson was trying to get Dick away from her.

How pleased she was when the doctor arrived, and how astonished he was at the change in his patient.

"So you have found your name?" he asked, quietly.

"Yes, sir. I do not know how I came to forget it, but there are many things which I had forgotten. I feel as if I had been asleep."

"So you have, so you have!"

"And dreaming?"

"Yes, and dreaming. Is this your brother, Mrs. Melsham?"

"Yes, doctor."

"Will you walk with me to my hotel? I want you to bring back some medicine for Dick."

"Yes, doctor, I would really like to do so. I am so glad, so happy, that I don't know whether I am walking on my head or my feet."

"What are you so happy about?"

"Finding that young gentleman. Do you know, doctor, his uncle was just nigh distracted about him? He believed him dead—oh, he is very rich, is his uncle—"

"And offered a big reward, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, and the coast was searched, but nothing was heard of him."

"And you propose taking this young man back to the States?"

"Or course."

"And claiming the reward?"

"Why not, sir? Money is always useful; but, all the same, I don't know that I should take the reward, as it was only by accident I found him."

"Tell me the entire story. All you know about him."

Nelson repeated the story, which is known to all our readers, and the doctor was convinced he was uttering the truth.

"I believe you, Nelson."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now let us talk as men of the world. Has this uncle ever seen his nephew?"



"No, sir."  
 "Has he any portrait of him?"  
 "I do not know, but I am afraid not."  
 "Can you find any of the passengers who were with Leslie Norton on that eventful voyage?"  
 "I am afraid not. I have not heard anything of them since the wreck."  
 "Where is the captain of the *Lone Star*?"  
 "He is on the Pacific Mail now, sir, running from 'Frisco to China."  
 "And the other officers?"  
 "All scattered."  
 "That is bad."  
 "You see, sir, it took some time to fit up the *Lone Star* for service again, and we were all poor men, so could not afford to wait."  
 "As I expected. Now what proof have you that this waif is Leslie Norton?"  
 "I know him."  
 "But outside your own word?"  
 "I have none."  
 "You tell me that there is another nephew who is not friendly to Leslie?"  
 "That is so, sir."  
 "Then suppose they should deny that you have found Leslie?"  
 "But they cannot."  
 "My dear innocent, they can and may."  
 "What am I to do, then?"  
 "Proceed cautiously. I believe your story, but others may not. Even your own sister doubted you."  
 "She did?"  
 "Yes; and told me I should have two patients instead of one."  
 "You have some time before you," continued the doctor. "I cannot allow Leslie to leave for a month yet. What will you do during that time?"  
 "Stay right here. At least, I mean stay with him."  
 "But the cost?"  
 "Say, doctor! I'll tell you a secret. I have had some money left me. Sarah knows nothing about it. I haven't had time to tell her."  
 "I am glad to hear of your good fortune."  
 "So am I. I didn't want the money."  
 "It is always useful."  
 "Steady now, doctor. I can work. I am offered a ship, and I—"

He paused.  
 "Must refuse it."  
 "Why?"  
 "I'll stay right here and see the young fellow righted."  
 "How much is the reward?"  
 "Don't talk about that."  
 "But I must. How much is it?"  
 "A thousand dollars."  
 "That isn't much."  
 "I'd not touch a nickel of it."  
 "What is the uncle's property worth?"  
 "I do not know, but the estate is a big one and a grand one."  
 "Is Leslie the next of kin?"  
 "The what?"  
 "The nearest relative, the heir-at-law?"  
 "I don't know. There is that other nephew,"—"nevy," he called it—"and a nice, clean-cut sort of a girl, a niece."  
 "Then, supposing the old recluse—"

"Don't call him names, sir, though a rose with any other name—you know what the poet says?"

The doctor smiled as he continued:

"Suppose the uncle died, the estate might be divided into three portions."

"Yes."

"They may not fight."

"They won't. Mr. Norton won't, and Miss Loring won't, either, and the other chap is a land lubber, and I could double him up very quickly."

"Keep your own counsel, Nelson. I will help you all I can. I will write to my lawyer in New York at once, and he will find out what action will be likely to be taken."

"Thank you, doctor."

"I suppose I must send some medicine, or your sister will doubt me."

Dr. Welland wrote a prescription and Quartermaster Nelson got the druggist to compound the soothing draught.

"That is a thorough-going, straightforward man," thought the doctor, when he was once more alone. "But I am afraid he will have trouble. It looks like a fairy story. Wrecked off the American coast, washed ashore, picked up by a smuggler who will be afraid to go into court, brought to Jamaica, for months is an imbecile, suddenly restored to health of mind, and claims to be one of the heirs to a great estate. This is as nice a case as ever lawyers got a chance to take up. How will it end?"

## CHAPTER XV.

### LESLIE'S LETTER.

"Is there any justice in this world of ours?"

The question which has been asked by poor wretches in every country and in every age, was voiced by Quartermaster Nelson as he conversed with his sister about Leslie.

"Justice! There may not be much in Jamaica, but in the States, brother—in the States you'll find it," answered Sarah, loyally.

"So I thought; but here is this great doctor of yours goes and says that I've got to prove that Leslie Norton is Leslie Norton, as though any one could doubt it. I tell you what, Sarah, I believe doctors and lawyers are all alike; the more doctors the more diseases, the more lawyers, I'm blamed if there ain't more laws. And they're all made so that no one but a lawyer can understand them."

That was a long speech for Nelson, but he only said what others, with far more education, have asserted.

"But Dr. Welland—" began Sarah.

"Is a right good fellow, only, you see, he's like a street car; he's got to run on the rails or he ain't much good, whereas I'm like a buggy; if the side of the road suits me, I go, and if the middle is best, I take it. I don't often get blocked, because I dodge in and out. Now what would be the sense of making a ship run in a regular line across the water?"

"But, brother, what has that got to do with Dick?"

"Everything; he's better, ain't he?"

"Yes."

"And begins to remember things?"

"Of course."

"He knows his name, and he knows all about his family; now, where's the sense in keeping him here? Why not let him go and see his uncle, who's a nice old fellow, if he does think he can fly."

"Welland is a right good chap— Hello, Leslie, what is the matter now?"

Leslie had entered the room, and so led to the question, for he was looking very sad.



"I was thinking."

"Bad habit. You know what the poet says: 'Give me the men about me that are fat; he'd have liked me.'"

And Nelson laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"I am not fat, though," remarked Leslie, and in truth he was not, for he was scarcely anything but skin and bone.

It was strange, but from the moment reason was reawakened, he began to grow thin and lost his appetite.

"What were you thinking?" asked Nelson.

"Do you remember what Dan said on board the *Lone Star*?"

"Can't say that I do. What was it?"

"He said I was a Jonah. And it is true; I do bring bad luck to everybody. You see, the *Lone Star* was wrecked; then I brought expense and trouble and annoyance to Sarah and you."

"Did you? Why, Leslie, wait a bit; put down your board at so much a week, and when you get to your uncle's he is going to give me a thousand dollars reward, and that will pay the bill ten times over. Say no more about it."

But Leslie thought more about it, and he knew that perhaps a lawsuit might have to be engaged in before he was recognized. He thought over a number of schemes by which he could save Nelson and Sarah Melsham additional expense.

Day after day he was worried, but passing the post office, a new idea entered his mind.

He would write to his uncle.

He entered a stationery store and asked permission to write a letter.

What should he say?

"DEAR UNCLE: I am here; the ship was wrecked, and I was brought to Jamaica. May I come to see you?"

He read it over, and did not like either the style or the writing, but his hand trembled, he was so very weak.

"If I wait until another day I perhaps shall not write at all. I'll let it go."

He read it once more, and signed himself:

"Your affectionate nephew,  
"LESLIE NORTON."

Then he added a postscript, which looked to him the most important part of the letter:

"P. S.—I shall stay here until I hear from you."

The deed was done, the letter dropped in the box, and in less than two hours the good steamer *Athos* left the harbor, and turned its bow in the direction of New York.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE LAWYER NEARLY SPOILS ALL.

Lawyer Caswell was one of the old-established lawyers of New York.

He knew more family secrets and histories than any other person in the whole State.

When Dr. Welland wrote him about the mystery of Leslie Norton, he read the letter over several times.

"Norton—let me see—Peter Norton, yes, lives in the colonial house—ought to hand it over to his State as a museum—dabbles in flying machines, loves orchids and it worth—how much?"

In this way he meditated in the solitude of his own luxuriously furnished private office.

He opened his safe and took therefrom a nicely bound book, indexed like a ledger.

He passed his finger down the index until he reached N. Then he opened the book and turned to the page which had been named opposite "Norton, Peter," in the index.

"Norton, Peter, son of Peter, unmarried, has sister Susan married Burnett (which see); one child, Moore, now living with Peter at Knowlhurst. Old Peter married second time; issue, Paul, who married Annie Leslie, leaving one son, Leslie; issue, Eleanor, who married a man named Loring (which see); issue, Eleanor, now at Knowlhurst."

This bold outline of biography Caswell glanced over.

"So Leslie is the son of Paul, who was half-brother of Peter—good."

Then he looked down the page and read:

"Knowlhurst worth as an estate forty or fifty thousand dollars; if cut up into smaller estates would realize double. Peter supposed to be worth a hundred thousand in good securities, and a like amount in the bank."

Lawyer Caswell closed his book, replaced it in the safe, locked the door carefully, and sat down at his desk.

"This is how it stands: Leslie claims to be nephew. As one of the next of kin his share would be, let us say, one-third. That would be worth fighting for. But, suppose Peter has made a will. He can give every red cent to the others. Bad for the claimant. Would Peter fight? He might, for he is obstinate, and if he did the claimant would get nothing. Let me see, Welland says the boy has no money. That is bad, for who could pay the lawyers?"

It was Saturday, and Caswell religiously closed his office at one o'clock.

Instead of going home, he took train to Knowlhurst.

Peter Norton was away, but Caswell was charmed with Moore Burnett.

There was an openness about the young man which was fascinating.

Shrewd, cunning and critical as the lawyer was, he fell into the snares of the nephew, and before he left had made up his mind that if one honest, candid, innocent young man existed in the world, it was Moore Burnett.

The subject of Leslie had not been broached; the lawyer had invented some other excuse for entering Knowlhurst.

It was Moore who first mentioned his cousin.

"My uncle has suffered very much over the loss of his nephew," he said. "And, indeed, it was a sad blow."

"Nephew? Did he die?" asked Caswell.

"Sir, it was really tragic. I nearly went mad over it. He was on his way here, and the steamer was wrecked; he was the only one lost."

"Was he drowned?"

"There is no doubt of that."

"His body rests, then, I suppose, with the Norton kin?"

"His body was never found, sir. Poor uncle has borne it very badly; it has aged him—"

"Did he love his nephew?"

"We never saw him."

Moore gave Caswell a history of the family, but perhaps the lawyer knew it even better than did the narrator.

"It is strange. I shouldn't wonder if some one was to turn up and claim to be your cousin," suggested the lawyer.

Moore laughed, uneasily.

"I never thought of that. But he could not prove his identity."

"No, no, no, that's so; but he might make out a strong case. You see, he might get some one to swear he was picked up after the wreck—"

"Of course, but uncle would spend every cent he possessed to oppose such a claim and to punish such an imposter. There is a tablet in the church recording his death."

"Indeed? Then I suppose he is dead."

"Yes, sir. Won't you stay until my uncle returns?"

"No, thank you. I may do myself the honor of calling again, for I am extremely interested in orchids."

"Uncle will be delighted."

As Lawyer Caswell walked back to the depot he concluded to advise his friend and client, Dr. Allan Welland, not to have anything to do with the claim of Leslie Norton.

Moore Burnett formed a far different opinion of Caswell to what the lawyer had of the young man.

"Sneaking old cove! To think I could not see through him. He is in with somebody who wants to blackmail uncle, or perhaps he has a bogus Leslie somewhere. Well, let him make the claim, that is all."

He said nothing to the madam or to Eleanor, but when his uncle returned he was apparently very open with him, and led the good old man to believe that an attempt would be made to foist an imposter upon him.

"I think I shall be a match for them," said Peter. "Let them try what they can do. Poor Leslie is dead; I have no doubt of that."

"There can be no doubt, uncle."

"No, I am afraid not."



## CHAPTER XVII.

"HOW SMALL THE WORLD REALLY IS."

"My dear Nelson, I don't think you have the ghost of a chance."  
 "You don't?"  
 "No. My lawyer is the best in the States, and he advises——"  
 "What?"  
 "That a letter be written to Peter Norton, and if, after stating the facts, or what you believe to be facts, he refuses to acknowledge the young man, then let the matter drop."  
 "That would be unjust."  
 "Why would it? Leslie says he always doubted whether he would be welcome, and what worse off will he be?"  
 "My lawyer has been to see Peter Norton."  
 Nelson bit his lip to prevent himself using a very strong expression. The act controlled him mind, and he asked very quietly:  
 "What did Mr. Norton say?"  
 "He did not see him."  
 "I thought you said he had."  
 "No, I said he went to see him, but Norton was away; the young nephew was there——"  
 "And your lawyer went and blabbed the whole thing to him."  
 "It appears so."  
 "So, we are dished."  
 "I do not understand."  
 "Don't you? That young fellow, Moore Burnett, wants to keep Leslie out of the way and——"  
 "Well?"  
 "He is our enemy."  
 "Are you sure?"  
 "Positive."  
 "Caswell thinks him a nice young fellow, as open as daylight, and as clear as a crystal."  
 "Then all I can say is that your lawyer is not as smart as you think him. How long will it be before Leslie can travel?"  
 "He has made wonderful progress and will be as strong as ever he was, mentally, in a month."  
 "Must he stay here as long as that?"  
 "It would be better."  
 While Nelson and the doctor were discussing Leslie Norton, that young man was trying to solve a difficult problem.  
 He was awaiting a letter from his uncle, but was, he felt, a burden on good, kind-hearted Sarah Melsham.  
 She professed that he was the greatest assistance to her, but he knew she could get along just as well without him.  
 He was walking through the streets, wondering how he could obtain some money.  
 He happened to catch sight of the newspaper office, and saw the boys pasting the advertisement sheets on a bulletin-board.  
 "WANTED.—A young man, good address, quick at figures and rapid writer; temporary situation only."

The advertisement was a new one, the place near by, and Leslie hurried to make application.  
 A clerk was wanted in a mercantile office to supply the place of one who was sick.  
 Leslie had the good address required, he was pleasing and his manner courteous; he showed what he could do in the way of writing and worked out an invoice so quickly that the merchant was well pleased.

"It is only for a month."  
 "I should be pleased to take it."  
 "You look delicate."  
 "I have been sick, sir, but feel better now. I suppose you would like to have references?"  
 "No. Don't care about them. If I like a person's looks I trust them; if I don't, it would not matter to me if they were recommended by the governor-general. I think I will try you."  
 "Thank you, sir."  
 Salary was discussed, and Leslie was agreeably surprised at the liberal sum offered him.  
 In fact, Mollins & Westover believed in paying well for the work done for them.  
 They always had efficient service rendered in return, and many a man, who would idle elsewhere, worked as though he had a stake in the business.  
 There was not a more surprised man in Jamaica than Nelson when Leslie said, in a most casual manner:  
 "I go to the office at eight-thirty in the morning."

"Office—what office?"

Then he explained, and Nelson was inclined to be angry.  
 "It's not treating me fair. Didn't I tell you I looked upon you as my own boy, and now, after all my instructions, you've gone and departed from them."

"I am sorry you see it in that light."  
 "Never mind. You're a brick, and will get on. Only don't go and hurt yourself. What did you say the name was?"  
 "Mollins & Westover."  
 "Ah! good firm. Have a place in New York. Dealers in all sorts of West India goods, from rum to palm-trees. I wonder—but there——"

"What?"  
 "Only a coincidence."  
 "Coincidence?"  
 "Yes; have you forgotten that sport who was on the *Lone Star*—Jake Westover?"  
 "No."  
 "Same name."  
 "Nothing in that. There are lots of Westovers in the world."  
 "So there are, so there are. Well, good luck to you, my boy."  
 Every mail Leslie looked for a letter from his uncle, but none came.

"I am not wanted, I am not wanted."  
 Many a time he repeated that, and once in the hearing of Nelson.

"Gammon and spinach!" exclaimed that old salt. "Not wanted! I tell you the old man loves you. There's foul play at work somewhere—mark me if there isn't."

In the meantime Leslie was making a good name for himself in the office of Mollins & Westover, and when his month expired they were sorry to lose him.

"Norton, how would you like New York?"  
 "I——"  
 "Of course you don't know what I mean; but I have just had a letter from the office there. I can put you in as good a berth as any young man has. Will you accept?"

"You are too good."  
 "No, I am not. I know when I am well served. Only one thing—don't get led away. I am afraid things are not looked after as they should be. My cousin is a great sport, and neglects the business."

"Your cousin?"  
 "Yes, Norton; he is in charge; but he is away half the time, for Jake Westover would go a thousand miles to see a boxing-bout."

"Jake Westover, sir?"  
 "Yes. Read the name in the papers?"  
 "I think I have met him."

"Have you? Where?"  
 "There was a gentleman of that name on the steamer *Lone Star*——"

"That was Jake; he was wrecked."

"So was I, sir."  
 Then came explanations, and when all was told to Nelson he got up, walked to a little book-case in his room, and took down one containing a selection of quotations.

"Wasn't sure about my quotation, Leslie, but here it is. It seems written on purpose for this occasion."

And Nelson read, with but poor emphasis and entirely disregarding punctuation:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
 Rough-hew them how we will."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

WHO CAN HE BE?

Peter Norton never received Leslie's letter from Jamaica, Moore saw it, and as the writing was strange he opened it.  
 "Whew!"

A prolonged whistle marked his surprise.  
 "Great Scott! This is a pretty kittle of fish! I have it. That old fellow who was here knew of this letter coming. It is a plot, a conspiracy. Shall I show it to uncle? No, I guess not. I—— What does it say? That he will stay in Jamaica until he hears from uncle. Let him stay."

That night Moore opened Peter's desk and found the letters written from Texas by Leslie.



He carefully compared them, and the perspiration stood in great beads on his face.

There was a striking resemblance in the writing.

Fearful of being discovered, he took the letters to his room, carefully locking the desk again.

Where did he get his key?

His uncle had no idea any one but himself possessed one. But Moore had abstracted his uncle's, and had made a wax cast, from which it was very easy to get a key made.

He destroyed the letter.

Was it fancy?

Was his brain giving way?

He had thrown the letter into the fire, but it seemed as though it would not be destroyed.

The paper burned, but the writing was as legible as ever.

He gave the charred paper a touch with the poker, and the letter was no more; but one little piece floated away and rested under the table, and on that piece the word "Leslie" was plainly discernible.

When he had got rid of that he felt easier.

He was glad he had not told Eleanor.

If his uncle should ever find out about the letter?

If—why, he would be able to plead that a conspiracy had been attempted, but his shrewdness had nipped it in the bud.

So the weeks passed, and Leslie had given up all thoughts of any letter from his uncle, and had bidden Sarah Melsham farewell, and sailed to New York on one of Mollins & Westover's own ships.

There was a new captain, and Leslie was found with him all the time.

The captain's name was Nelson, and he was proud that he was the skipper of such a big ship, and prouder still that every voyage he would be able to see his sister.

The first Sunday Leslie spent in New York he went to hear a popular preacher in the morning, and in the afternoon a strange longing caused him to go to the neighborhood of his uncle's residence.

He was proud, and had not written a second time.

Some day he might go and see his uncle, but not yet.

He reached Knowlthurst, and was surprised at the long carriage drive and the splendid house.

"Proud old man! He never forgave my father, and I'll never forgive him."

He strolled back to the village, and seeing the church door open, entered.

The church was built of stone, and was a very pretty edifice.

He looked around, all unconscious that he was not alone.

But in the organ gallery sat Eleanor Loring; she had been playing, but was searching for some music when Leslie entered.

She did not touch the keys while he was there, but peeped through the divided curtain, and felt her heart beat faster, for she had never seen a face which had so impressed her.

All unconscious of being watched, Leslie stood looking at the tablet which announced his own death.

It was the first he knew of it.

His brain whirled, he grew dizzy, and he fell backward on the carpet which covered the aisle.

Eleanor was downstairs quickly and summoned assistance.

"Who can he be?" she asked. "He is handsome. Poor fellow, he must be weak."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### LESLIE'S MISTAKE.

Eleanor Loring bent over the fainting youth and gently fanned him until he rewarded her by opening his eyes.

"Poor young man! he must be weak," she murmured, as she still continued her labor of love.

"I thank you, miss; I have been a long time sick, and I must have fainted," said Leslie, as he gradually remembered the surroundings.

"Will you not come outside? The pure, fresh air will revive you." Then, seeing how weak he was, she added, thoughtfully: "Lean on me. Oh, do not object; I am very strong."

She led him away from the church into the Knowlthurst grounds, and he shivered as he realized where he was.

Mistaking his agitation, she tried to set his mind at ease by telling him that they were not trespassing; the public used the

path constantly, and "there is such a nice seat, so comfortable, a little farther on, where you can rest."

Once only did she wonder how she could talk to a stranger like that.

She was slightly confused, but more for fear that he would not understand her than any doubt as to whether she was acting as a very modest young lady should do.

That did not trouble her. She had believed in being independent and free, and with all the innocence of youth she saw no evil in talking to a strange young man.

"And both were young, and one was beautiful."

"It was the same old story—the natural drawing together of sympathetic souls.

"I am a stranger here," said Leslie.

"What did you think of our church?" she asked him.

"It is—" and he paused.

"Excuse my presumption, but did you know—that young man, Norton? I think the tablet said he was drowned."

"Know him? No. It was very sad, poor boy; his friends were very grieved."

"How was he drowned?"

"The steamer was wrecked, and he was washed overboard."

"It was sad. Is he buried here?"

"No, alas! no; his body was never recovered."

"Then—"

"You were going to say, perhaps he was never drowned. I think that sometimes, thought I never knew him; but his uncle is now convinced he is dead. There is my uncle. Will you allow me to—introduce you? I am sure uncle will be pleased to welcome any one who feels an interest in our church."

But Leslie suffered from a strange bashfulness, and asked to be excused.

The week passed, and Leslie returned to Knowlthurst again and wandered into the church.

A faint sound of harmony came from the organ, as if some one was playing so softly that 'twas not intended for other ears.

Leslie sat in one of the pews and waited.

The music grew louder, then gradually died away; the organist was evidently extemporizing.

A slight pause, and the magnificent harmony of "The Lost Chord" filled the church.

The music ceased, and Leslie arose to leave the church; he was disappointed, for he had hoped, in all the egoism of youth, that she would be there.

He passed out of the church, and from another door at the same moment came Eleanor Loring.

Why did she give a little startled gasp? Why was his face alternately red and white?

Why, when he courteously raised his hat in response to her bow, did he hesitate to speak?

Surely he did not wish her to make the first advance, but she did.

"Were you in the church?"

"Yes."

"For long?"

"Half an hour."

"Then you heard?"

"Were you the organist?"

"I was amusing myself."

"Do not speak of it so lightly. It was music which touched my heart, and preferable to any that the most brilliant organist could produce."

Coquettishly, yet with natural grace, she asked:

"If the organist had been some decrepit old man, instead of a giddy young girl, would you have said so?"

"The music itself answers that."

"In what way?"

"No decrepit old man could have made the organ speak so soulfully."

Leslie realized how necessary it was that they should know each other, and yet hesitated to tell her his true name.

In almost brusque words he told her his name was Richard Nelson, and the very moment he had uttered the falsehood he felt he would like to tear the tongue from his mouth.

"I am Eleanor Loring."

For three Sundays these young people met, and ere the last



hour had passed on that third Sunday, each felt that the days would be long, and the time hang heavily before the next Sunday came around.

## CHAPTER XX.

## NELSON'S STRATEGY.

Captain Nelson did not believe in trusting everything to lawyers. He had, as we know, but little confidence in them.

When next the ship which he commanded put into port, he managed to get a day ashore, and without saying a word to Leslie, he started for Knowlhurst.

Nelson had learned the art of diplomacy, and so had been careful to read up on the subjects of orchids.

He waddled up the carriage-drive carrying a bundle.

It was a very common-looking bundle, for a red pocket handkerchief, with the corners tied together, was the outside covering. He reached the house.

Peter was standing on the front steps as the captain walked up the drive.

Old Norton recognized Nelson, and a smile passed over his face. "I have a moss for you in my bundle," said Nelson, "a moss well adapted for orchids. Brought it from Jamaica for you."

"You are very kind."

"No, I am not. It is the least I can do for your nevvie."

"My nephew. Alas!"

"Yes; heard anything since?"

"Not a word."

"Sure?"

"Only that some imposter was going to make a claim."

"Oh! imposter, eh? Why, I'll have to find out about that, because—"

The captain hesitated. His tact was deserting him, and he very nearly disclosed his secret; he shook himself and quickly suggested that Norton should just take a glance at the moss.

So delighted became Peter Norton over the moss, which was a kind of lichen he had long wanted to obtain, that he declared Captain Nelson to be the best man that ever trod a deck since the days of Columbus.

"If only young Lester was here now——"

"But he is dead."

Nelson closed one eye, placed his finger to his nose, and looked as comical as a clown in a circus.

"My esteemed forerunner, Cap'n Cuttle, allus made a note of what he knew, and so do I. And if I says that Leslie may be alive, well, perhaps he is alive."

"Hush, hush! Do you believe it?"

"What?"

"That there is a conspiracy afloat?"

"Plenty of them, sir; they are as thick as blackberries in summer."

"But to foist upon me a bogus nephew."

"No, sir; there is not a man living could do it, but—what have you heard?"

"A lawyer from the city was here pumping, cross-examining and trying all his confounded art on Moore; but the young fellow saw through him and sent him to the right about very quickly."

"But—well, I can't keep a secret any better than the whale could keep Jonah; it's got to come—Leslie Norton is alive!"

Peter Norton staggered back, and threw himself, somewhat heavily, on the lounge.

"Have you proof?"

"I knew Leslie; I was with him three days on the *Lone Star*——"

"Go on, sir."

"And I know where he is to be found now."

"Who else can swear to the identity of—of this—this claimant?"

"I—great Heaven! you don't need more evidence, do you?"

"I do. I am ready to welcome Leslie, but I must never doubt his identity."

"You couldn't if you once met him. By the way, have you any portrait of him?"

"I have not."

"How would you have recognized him?"

"He would have come straight to me, and, of course, there would be no doubt."

"I will bring him."

"No. I respect you, Captain Nelson, but, old as I am, I am

not in my second childhood. Leslie Norton is dead. If he had been living he would have written to me."

"He did write."

"It is false!"

"How dare you? Why, Peter Norton, if you were not an old man, I——"

"What would you do?" asked Moore, entering at the time.

The scene was ludicrous. Tall, dignified Peter Norton—short, fat Captain Nelson—the one standing in the attitude of threatening, the other looking down with contempt on his short and squatty adversary.

"What would you do? Uncle, leave this son of a sea cook to me."

"What do you call me? Hang me, sir! but if I had you on board my ship, you should know the meaning of a rope's end."

"I have no doubt, but I am here; and unless you leave by the door very quickly, you shall by the window."

Had not Eleanor entered, there would doubtless have been an unpleasant rencounter between the youthful athlete and the podgy captain.

"My dear, this is no place for you."

"Is it not, uncle? This is an old friend of mine. I think you have not forgotten me?"

"No, no, dear young lady, I remember you, and you spoke kindly to me."

"Do you know a Richard Nelson? He is in a shipping office in New York."

"My dear, how should he?"

"But he is a sea captain, and Richard——"

"Who is Richard Nelson, Nelly?"

"A friend of mine, uncle, one of the nicest young men I ever met. He can talk of so many things."

"Indeed! and what do you know of young men?"

Eleanor laughed with a merry, silvery mirth, and insisted on the captain's going to see her pet canaries, for she was proud of her birds—in fact, just as proud as old Peter was of his orchids.

"Uncle, we shall be robbed by these imposters even yet."

"No, Moore, I am too sharp for them; but if Leslie is alive——"

"He is not."

"I do not think he is, but——"

"Uncle, I do believe any old crank could talk you into anything."

In the meantime Eleanor had captivated Nelson, and under pretense of the canaries had talked earnestly and sincerely.

"Is it true that cousin Leslie is alive?"

"Indeed it is, Miss Loring."

"Then why does he not come here?"

"And be called an imposter?"

"I think you wrong my uncle and my cousin, Moore."

"I hope I do, but, Miss Loring, Leslie did write, but got no answer."

"When?"

"A little time back. He was very sick at my sister's house and he wrote; he begged for a reply, but none came."

"Uncle never received it. I am sure he never could."

"I think you are right about that, but who did? May I say what I think?"

"Yes, indeed you may."

"Then, I fancy that cousin of yours—the one who wanted to land me into the path outside through the window—I fancy he got it."

"He would never dare."

"Here he comes; I will leave you, for there is but little chance for me when he is around."

## CHAPTER XXI.

## A SENSATIONAL STORY.

Leslie Norton had made a position for himself in the house of Mollins & Westover.

Each day he was winning golden opinions of his employers.

One thing worried him; Jake Westover, who was supposed to look after the interests of the firm, was away, and Leslie thought it wrong.

Jake—no one ever called him anything else—was on the Pacific Coast.

An athletic club of 'Frisco had offered a big purse as a prize to be contested for by middleweight pugilists.



Jake Westover was interested in "backing" a man who was spoken of as "The Unknown."

Leslie was very anxious for his return, inasmuch as he wished for his identification.

But the weeks passed along and the hot days of July had merged into the still more sultry ones of August, when Leslie was beginning to think his employer would never return, that Jake Westover did really walk into the New York office.

He looked disgusted with himself and everybody else; but when he saw Leslie his face assumed a new expression.

"Young fellow, where did you spring from?" he asked.

"Jamaica, sir."

"Jamaica, eh? Well, it is remarkable! I could have sworn——"

"That you had seen me before, sir?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Now you will laugh at me, for I was going to say you traveled from Texas on the same steamer I did."

"The *Lone Star*?"

"That was the one."

"Who are you?"

"Whom do you think I am?" asked Leslie.

"Leslie Norton."

"You are right, Mr. Westover."

"But I thought you were drowned."

"I do not think I was, or I should not be in your employ."

Several sporting men entered the office, and as with one accord, asked:

"Are you back, Jake?"

They could see that he was. There was not the least doubt about it, yet they asked the question in all seriousness, and he answered just as seriously.

"Yes; landed last night, tired as a dog, and cussing the world in general."

"It's off, isn't it?"

"Yes, found out just in time."

"It is true, then?"

"True as gospel. My unknown was all ready for the mill, and trained beautifully, but the thing was to be a hippodrome."

"How?"

"The unknown was to let himself be beaten, and the winner was to give him half the purse."

"Great Scott! And I had a pony on it."

"A pony! I had twenty ponies and a lot of horses besides," Jake laughingly retorted. "To be serious, if the mill had gone on I should have lost twenty thousand."

"Great Scott!"

"I found out just in time. But no sooner do I come back a wiser man, than I am met in my office here by a man risen from the dead."

"What?"

"Fact. Leslie, where are you?"

"Here, sir. I will be with you in a moment."

"Fact! Here he is. That young fellow was drowned, washed out to sea, eaten by the fishes, and now a very respected clerk in my employ tells me he has seen his tombstone."

"Tablet, sir."

"Same thing, 'Sacred to the memory' kind of business—drowned, dead and eaten by sharks—it's as good as a romance. Then there is a big estate all belonging to him——"

"No, sir, I only——"

"Don't interrupt me, Leslie. I like to tell the story in my own way."

Westover told such a yarn that his friends opened their eyes in astonishment, and each in turn invited Leslie to go out with him, and each offered "to set 'em up," which vulgar expression meant that each one would congratulate Leslie on his rescue from death, by paying for that enemy which men too often "put into their mouths to steal away their brains."

Westover was quite proud of the way in which his friends lionized Leslie.

The clerk had become quite a public character, and his employer was delighted.

But when, on the following morning, one of the papers had the whole story printed, with sensational headlines and equally sensational details, the name only of the party referred to omitted, the deficiency being made good by means of long dashes, Leslie was annoyed.

"THE SEA GIVES UP ITS DEAD!"

Leslie read the headline, and at first was inclined to laugh, but when the next line declared that "The Dead Returned to Claim an Immense Estate," he was angry, and entered Jake Westover's private office in a high state of excitement.

"Mr. Westover, do you see that?" pointing to the article.

"Yes, and a blamed good article it is."

"But it is not the truth!"

"The truth? Surely you do not go to the daily papers for such a scarce article, do you? My dear young fellow, it is just as true as most of the sensational articles."

"But I have no right to my uncle's estate——"

"Stuff and nonsense! Why, Leslie, let the people believe all that article says, and your fortune is made. I could give you a hundred a week just to go and tell your experiences on the stage."

Leslie was so thoroughly enraged that he could not say another word, but returned to his desk in the outer office, disinclined for work, and yet not knowing what to do.

Peter Norton read the article, and his face bore an expression of anxiety utterly foreign to it.

Madam Dupont declared that it made "her creep," whatever she meant by that, and Eleanor said that she had been expecting something to be made public soon.

Moore was furious, but he calmed himself and sought his uncle.

"Seen the paper, uncle?"

"Yes."

"The conspirators have struck the first blow."

"So it appears."

"This claimant says he is heir to a very large estate. I thought Leslie was poor, and certainly he is not heir to your property, uncle."

"Who said he wasn't?"

"No one, but——"

"The property is mine, and if I like to give it all to a society for the maintenance of vagrant crats, whose right is it to interfere?"

"The State——"

"I know what is in your mind, Moore. Because I have educated you and Nelly, you have thought I should bequeath you all I possess. I never said so, did I?"

"No, sir."

"Then don't think of such a thing in future. You have a profession, or will have one; work at it and make a living for yourself. I will provide for Nelly until she marries."

"And then?"

"Why, her husband will have to keep her of course."

Moore was in no humor to talk further; his uncle was in too strange a mood.

He returned to his own room, and locking the door, clinched his hands and ground his teeth with rage.

"He has made a will. I know he has, but where can he have placed it? If only I could find it."

Leslie would have stood but a poor chance if left to the tender mercies of his cousin.

"That other will. I know where that is; it would suit me. Let me see, its provisions were that the property was to be divided between Eleanor and myself. No, not exactly that, but it amounted to the same thing, for after giving twenty thousands dollars to each of us, it provided that the skull and contents of the workshop should go to Leslie, if living; and then we were to be the residuary legatees. So practically we should inherit everything."

Moore talked as though he had a client to whom he was explaining the provisions of a will.

"But there was a later will. What has uncle done with it? The old fellow is mad—stark, staring mad. I wish he would die."

Peter Norton dismissed the sensational article from his mind for the time and entered the greenhouse.

The tulip was about to open its beautiful leaves and display its rich color.

He was so absorbed in his contemplation of the tulip, whose leaves were beginning to open, that he never once thought of the sensational article which was being talked of by hundreds of thousands of his fellow-citizens.

All day he sat by the side of the tulip, but the day was spent in vain; the sun went down and the leaves closed up tighter in order that it might, like tired humanity, repose.

Moore was up early next morning in order that he might secure the papers before any one else in the house saw them.

Four morning chroniclers of the great events of the preceding day had long articles about the mysterious claimant, and three had portraits differing from each other, yet each purporting to be the



"counterfeit presentment" of the unknown; not one, however, bore the slightest resemblance to Leslie.

Our young hero managed to keep his name out of the papers, for Westover, alarmed at the clerk's annoyance at the publicity, had begged his friends to conceal the identity of the claimant.

But Leslie felt that every one must know him, and he determined to go and see his uncle.

But as the French say: "*L'homme propose et Dieu dispose*," so Leslie found it.

Dr. Allan Welland had returned to New York, and having learned Leslie's address, called to see him.

Leslie was glad to see the bright and happy face of the great specialist who had restored his reason, and thanked him many times.

"I did not come on a passenger steamer," said the doctor.

"How then?"

"With your old friend, Nelson."

"Not very pleasant."

"No, but yet just what I wanted. I like to rough it at times. What is all this fuss they are making about you?"

Again Leslie denied all knowledge of the articles, save that he had read them as they appeared.

"I shall go and see my uncle."

"That won't do at all."

"Why?"

"If he disowned you, all would be lost. There is a right way to go about these affairs. I have talked it over with Nelson."

"But I can manage—"

"Wait a moment. You have all the impetuosity of youth. Have you forgotten that Nelson ought to be rewarded?"

"No."

"If you lose all, he is the greatest sufferer."

"You know best. Do as you like."

Dr. Allan Welland accompanied Leslie to the law office of Caswell.

That distinguished practitioner was perfectly willing to take up the case of Leslie Norton, providing that Dr. Welland guaranteed the costs.

Leslie was indignant.

"I have no claim on my uncle. I wish to see him, that is all."

"But—"

"I tell you, sir, that my uncle owes me nothing. I have no claim on him. All I wish is for him to know that I am alive, and that I had nothing whatever to do with the articles in the newspapers."

"Well, well, well! Then my work is of a very simple nature. I will write to Peter Norton of Knowlhurst."

He did so.

The letter was read over to Leslie, who did not like the curt, business-like tone, but the letter was sent by registered mail.

When Peter Norton opened it, Moore was beside him.

"I am instructed by Mr. Leslie Norton—"

"What did I tell you, uncle? That Caswell is the man who came here and professed that he had found my cousin in Jamaica."

"Answer it, Moore. Tell Lawyer Caswell that I should be pleased to see this client of his, providing, of course, that he has proof of his identity."

"Yes, uncle. I should be pleased if my cousin is really alive."

But the letter he sent was worded very differently to his uncle's intentions.

"I am desired by Mr. Peter Norton," it began, and after the most formal acknowledgement of the lawyer's letter, he continued: "My uncle will not recognize your client as Leslie Norton unless you are prepared with the most satisfactory proof of his identity; and, furthermore, he considers that the appeal to a lawyer is scarcely the way in which my cousin, had he been alive, would have approached his uncle."

## CHAPTER XXII.

"I LOVE YOU."

"I told you, gentlemen, how it would end," said Leslie, as he heard the letter from his cousin read; "I knew that my uncle would never recognize me, especially if I asked for that recognition through a lawyer, however learned or respected he might be."

"But, my dear sir, you must compel acknowledgement," the lawyer remarked.

"Must compel?" repeated the young claimant. "May I ask why?"

"Because, if your uncle were to die, you would be one of the heirs."

"But I am not a claimant for his property."

"That does not matter; you ought to do your duty."

Leslie was almost indignant, but he was in their hands.

A little more and he would assert himself, and act with independence.

Dr. Welland urged him to let Mr. Caswell enter an action on some trivial matter, which would enable Leslie to prove his identity.

But all the satisfaction which could be obtained was that he would think over the matter.

A few days later Leslie took a day's vacation from the office, and went to Knowlhurst.

He walked about, hoping to see his cousin, and half-inclined to tell her of his identity.

He knew now that the girl who had tended him so carefully when he fainted in the church, that the organist whose music was fascinatingly pleasant to his ear, was his own cousin.

But his respect, fast growing into a warmer affection, made him hesitate.

If he was acknowledged, her share of his uncle's property might be decreased.

If he remained unknown, would it not be to her advantage?

While he was deep in the mystery of thoughtland, he suddenly looked up and saw Eleanor.

His face was as red as the reddest poppy, but she met him with a smile so radiant that he felt at his ease almost immediately.

"You seem to admire our country village, Mr. Nelson."

How he hated the name he had adopted; and yet, had he given his own name, would she have met him so cordially?

"It has charms for me greater than words can describe."

"Indeed! I am pleased, for I am very proud of Knowlhurst."

Gradually he led up to the topic so important to him.

"Is your uncle very much incensed against this—this—he was going to say imposter, but dare not, so added—"claimant?"

"Claimant—why no. Why should he be?"

"But to be imposed upon cannot be very pleasant?"

"Certainly not; but uncle is not imposed on. But how did you know that Mr. Norton was my uncle?"

"I heard some one say so."

"Oh!"

There was very much expressed in that interjection. It might mean that she was pleased he had been inquiring, or that he had been rude in speaking with any one about her.

"If this claimant proved his identity, he would be your cousin?"

"Yes."

"That would be happiness."

"Indeed? You speak now like the stranger that you are, for those who know me do not say so."

"Then it is they who do not know you."

"I don't think so. You see, I can shoot—yes, don't open your eyes so wide, for I can. Shall I tell you what I did? I struck a silver five-cent piece at ten paces—I used Moore's revolver. He tried, but he failed, and you should have seen him. He was real mad. Then I can row—oh, I don't mean like other girls do, but I can take a skiff and pull the same stroke as a man. Now I am sure you must be disgusted."

"Why should I be?"

"Because—"

"Because what?"

"They say it is unfeminine."

"I do not think so, Miss Loring. I really believe a girl should be able to defend herself—"

"Box, you mean?"

"Yes—no—Hardly that; and yet, if she would only use the strength she possessed, it would no longer be said she belonged to the weaker sex."

"You are quite a champion of the ladies."

"You know, a girl's wrist is as strong as a male's at the same age. The boy is taught to develop his strength, the girl is told it is unmaidenly; but I knew a girl, she was not as old by nearly a year as I am, but she could excel me in strength. She could lift heavier weights, and had a firmer grip, yet she was delicate-looking and very ladylike."

"Does she live in New York?"

"No, in Texas."



"In Texas? Have you been there? What part of Texas? My cousin, the one who is said to have been drowned, came from there. Do you know Galveston?"

Eleanor rattled along with her questions, so that it was impossible for Leslie to answer them, and perhaps it was fortunate, for it gave him an opportunity to recover his sang froid.

He had let slip words he wished he could recall, and yet only that very morning he had partly resolved he would reveal his identity.

"I said she now lived in Texas."

"Oh!"

Eleanor was silent for some moments, and seemed in doubt whether she ought not to make some excuse to leave him and go home.

There was a mutual fascination which overcame all scruples, and the two walked along until the Knowlhurst gate was reached.

"Will you not come and be introduced to my uncle?"

"I should like it of all things, but——"

"He already knows your name, and that I am acquainted with you."

Leslie was in a quandary.

He knew it was wrong to meet and walk with Eleanor, and refuse to make the acquaintance of her friends; but he was certain it would be against his own interests to do so under an assumed name.

While he hesitated, he heard some one speaking in almost angry tones.

Then another voice smote on his ear, and he wished he was a mile away, for that other voice belonged to Captain Nelson without a doubt.

"My uncle," said Eleanor, as Peter spoke loudly.

"My nephew, sir, would never go to a lawyer and get him to threaten," he was saying.

"It was against your nephew's wish altogether," answered Nelson.

"I'll not believe it, sir, I'll not believe it. This is a free country. Don't tell me a young man is dragged to a lawyer's and made to do that which his soul would abhor. No. Captain Nelson, this young fellow is an arrant imposter, take my word for it. Your innocent heart has been imposed upon. You sailors are no good on land."

"But——"

Nelson paused.

Leslie was standing only a few feet away, a arbor vitae hedge only separating him from his friend.

He was trembling, and Eleanor was alarmed.

Was her friend subject to heart failure?

She feared so, and was sorry, for she had learned to respect him more than any one she had ever known.

Nelson had paused, and Norton wondered at the sudden transformation in the captain, for he, too, had become as white as his bronzed skin would allow.

Peter Norton saw the captain staring in the direction of the hedge, and his eyes fell on Eleanor.

"My niece! Eleanor!"

"Yes, uncle."

Suddenly Peter Norton's face became purple with excitement.

"Who is that—young—man?"

"Mr. Richard Nelson."

Leslie stepped forward.

"No, sir; that is not my name, though it is the one I gave to Miss Loring. I am Leslie Norton, your nephew."

"That you are, my boy," spoke up Captain Nelson; "but I am right sorry you should ever have used the name Sarah Melsham gave you."

Peter Norton was furious.

Turning on Nelson with almost savage earnestness, he glared at him, too much agitated to speak at first.

"I thought you innocent," he said, when he had controlled himself sufficiently to be able to speak. "I see I was very much mistaken. So you want to foist your own son on me as my nephew? This, then, is the claimant? Boy! thank Heaven this matter has been exposed in time. Learn a lesson from it. Honesty pays best at all times."

"Mr. Norton, hear me."

"There is nothing you can say that I would wish to hear."

"You do me an injustice—I will speak. Your younger brother, Paul, may have done wrong in marrying sweet Annie Leslie, but she was a good wife and a good mother."

"Hush! Your parrot talk only enrages me. Is it not enough that you have dared to assume the name of one whose body lies in the Atlantic——"

"Uncle—Mr. Norton, I know appearances are against me. I know that for weeks my reason had left my brain, and I was like a child without memory, but I wrote you from Jamaica. I asked you to write me a line. I don't want any of your money. I would refuse to touch it, but I promised my mother that——"

"Hush, I tell you! Do not dare to mention her."

"I promised her I would come and see you——"

"It is enough. You are an imposter. Go, leave my grounds, or I will order you to be thrown out. Let me never see your face again."

Eleanor was crying bitterly.

She listened to all that was said, and with a woman's tact knew that it would not avail to take Leslie's part.

She remained speechless until Leslie turned to leave, and then she managed to whisper as he passed her:

"Do not despair. I—love—you."

It may have been unmaidenly, but it was not a time for scruples, and she feared he might commit some rash act.

Love told her that the surest comfort would be those three words, "I love you." And she uttered them, though so faint was her voice that Leslie scarcely heard them, and even then thought he must have imagined she had uttered the sweetest of all sentences.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### "I WILL PROVE MY IDENTITY."

Captain Nelson followed Leslie back to the village, while Peter Norton took Eleanor's arm with almost cruel grasp and dragged her toward the house.

It was the very first time that he had been really angry with her.

She never murmured or complained, for she had a purpose in view, an object to be attained which required the greatest calmness.

Captain Nelson waddled along the country road, his face as red as a peony, and the perspiration pouring from every pore in his body.

"You've gone and made a fool of yourself!" he ejaculated, at last.

"I wish you had all left me alone."

"What did you go and make such a fool of yourself for? Wasn't your own name good enough?"

"It was not that——"

"No, I know it. It was your confounded pride."

"Pride!"

"Yes, pride. You saw the girl, and a pretty nice girl she is, and you thought you would scare her away if she knew your name——"

"That isn't pride."

"Who said it was, smarty? I can't get to a thing straight like some folks; my ship has got to tack and tack and go with the tide. You hadn't any idea of going and saying: 'I am Leslie Norton;' no, you would be content to die and them never know anything about it. I tell you it's all false pride, so it is."

"Perhaps it is."

"I am sure of it. Now you are called an imposter. What are you going to do now?"

"I am going to prove that I am Leslie Norton."

"Bravo!"

"But I am going first to renounce all pecuniary benefit——"

"You are a fool."

"Thank you, captain."

"You do vex one so! How are you going to raise the money to prove your identity?"

"I shall not need any."

"My dear Norton, one would think you hadn't cut your eye-teeth, you are so innocent."

"I have let you and your friends act for me in the past, now I will see what I can do."

"Which means get out."

"No, captain; I shall ever be thankful to you and your sister, but I wish you would leave me now, and let me think."

"I'll go. Good-by, Leslie; if ever you want a friend I'm your man."



"I know it, and I esteem you more than any man I ever met, except my own father."

While this conversation was proceeding Peter Norton was pacing the library floor uneasily.

He was very angry.

He knew he had been cruel to Eleanor, and was all the more annoyed because she did not complain.

She had gone to her own room, and her eyes were red and hot. She could not weep, for pride forbade the flowing of the tears. "He shall not think he hurt me," she continued repeating to herself.

Moore was in Trenton, and would not be back until the evening, or maybe the next day, and she was glad that it was so.

Norton sent for her.

She entered the library as stiff and upright as the figure in armor, and as proud as any girl could be.

"Eleanor, how did you get to know that—that-boy?"

"I was playing the organ in the church, and I heard some one fall down. I looked from the gallery and saw him, on the floor."

"Well?"

"He had fainted at the sight of the tablet to the memory of Leslie—"

"Acting. He has been well drilled."

"He was not acting; he had really fainted."

"Indeed! What did you do?"

"I tried to restore him."

"Of course."

"Then I helped him to walk, he was so weak."

"Poor creature!"

Eleanor looked to see whether it was sympathy or sneering which had caused her uncle to utter those two words, and she soon satisfied herself that he had no sympathy with Leslie.

"You have met him often since?"

"Two or three times."

"By arrangement?"

"No, uncle; the meetings were purely accidental."

"He was loafing around here to coach himself up in the history of the family. I suppose he asked you a number of questions?"

That was the first moment Eleanor felt any doubt.

She remembered that Leslie had inquired very closely about her missing cousin, and asked if she had ever seen him.

"Yes, uncle, he did ask me some questions."

"What were they?"

"He asked if you were much annoyed when you heard that Leslie was coming to see you."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, he wanted to know whether you suffered when the report of his drowning was received."

"Of course."

"Uncle, does not your heart tell you that he is really your nephew?"

"No."

"Sure? Is there no feeling?"

"No, Eleanor. Never mention his name again; it is annoying to me. If I had done my duty I should have sent for the police."

"Uncle, look at this portrait."

Taken unawares, Peter Norton turned and saw a copy of an old portrait of Paul Norton.

Eleanor was fond of photography, and had copied all the Norton portraits.

"Is it not like?"

"No, no. Yes, there is a slight resemblance."

"How old was Uncle Paul when this was taken?"

"About twenty-five."

"And Leslie would be eighteen. I think it is very, very like."

"Go away, Eleanor; you, too, are in league against me."

"Against you, uncle? How can you say that?"

"You met this—this—young man."

"Forgive me, yes. All the time I felt strangely drawn to him."

"I wish Moore had been here."

"I do not."

"Don't you?"

"No, uncle. Moore would have been very angry, and perhaps the two would have fought."

"Humph! And your hero—your fainting hero might have got hurt, eh?"

Eleanor did not reply, but taking advantage of her uncle's pleasanter manner, left the room.

It was late that evening before Leslie could find the courage to tear himself away from Knowlhurst.

He had looked at a little locket which contained a lock of his mother's hair, and on it sworn that he would prove the truth of his claim, for her sake.

He would collect all the testimony he could and send it to his uncle.

He might have to go to Texas, and that would require money, but with the resoluteness of a strong impulse he saw no difficulties which he could not overcome.

He had reached the depot, and found that there was not a train to New York for nearly an hour.

To kill time he walked back to the village, and his attention was suddenly drawn, by a chance expression to two men who were loitering around.

"They are crooks," thought Leslie, "and seemingly waiting for some one."

But almost as soon as he noticed them they slunk away, and, as Leslie could clearly see, toward the vicinity of Knowlhurst.

"Do they mean to rob the house?"

The thought made him forget New York and everything else. He would follow and watch them.

Perhaps they instinctively felt they were watched, for several times they stopped and waited for Leslie to pass.

He, however, kept behind them, only was careful to escape being seen, until, tired of their repeated stops, he made a detour and reached Knowlhurst in advance of them.

It had become a firm belief with him that they were planning the robbery of Peter Norton's house.

Should he alarm the servants, or watch alone?

He thought the latter would be the better way, and secreted himself in a clump of hydrangeas, whose branches were nearly weighted to the ground with blossoms.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"IN A TIGHT PLACE."

"Rolling home in the mornings, boys!

Rolling home! Rolling home!"

Moore Burnett and his companion left the depot, and began singing the above refrain in a most uproarious fashion.

Moore had been visiting some friends at Trenton, and for the first time in his life had taken one more glass of wine than usual, with the effect of feeling foolishly mirthful and uproariously happy.

Yet he had sense enough to know that it was the stimulation of the wine, and not the natural happiness of youth which made him so noisy.

His friend, the son of the house where he had been visiting, was was not a fit companion for him, and Peter Norton had often warned him.

Moore was headstrong and willful.

Had it not been for the wine he would never have asked Tom King to visit Knowlhurst, and, even as it was, he never expected Tom would accept the invitation.

But he did, and the two youths walked along the country road without a thought or care to worry them.

Moore hoped his uncle would have retired, for, hospitable as old Norton was, Moore knew Tom would not be tolerated as a guest.

Alas! Tom King had too many of the vices and far too few of the virtues of youth.

"Rolling home in the morning, boys!" shouted Moore; and Tom re-echoed the line as though it was one of the finest sentences ever penned by inspired poet.

"Say, Moore, what a capital place for an adventure."

"Yes, but it is dull enough."

"When do you leave?"

"Next month, unless—"

"What?"

"The old man turns up his toes."

"In that case?"

"I should quit the law, college and everything else, settle down at Knowlhurst—that is, I would make it my home, but I would go to Paris, Berlin, London, perhaps through Italy and maybe Russia, come home, marry my cousin, and be happy ever after."

"And a very good programme, too; I wish I could join you."



"I wish you could. Tom, old fellow, we shall be chums all our lives."

"Of course."

"And we'll stand by each other, come what may?"

"Certainly."

"Give me your hand on it."

"What about that story of your cousin returning to life?"

"A fake!"

"I don't think so."

"Don't you? Well, I do. I tell you there isn't a shadow of truth in it."

"If I were you I would not be so sure of that."

"Anyway, I've fixed it all. If all the people of New York swore this fellow was my cousin, uncle would never believe it."

"Good thing for your sake."

"I am the favorite, anyway, and— Hello! did you see anything?"

"No; what?"

"I thought I could see two men moving about by the trees there."

"I didn't. 'Rolling home in—'"

Moore's hand, suddenly clapped over Tom's mouth, stopped the song.

"Hush! Uncle would never forgive you if he heard."

Moore reached the house.

It was all in darkness, for the good people went to bed early.

Moore opened the door and bade Tom follow him quietly upstairs to his own room.

"Not a word—on your life, not a word!"

Like culprits, the two young fellows ascended the stairs and entered Moore's room.

The door was closed and locked, and not until then did he light the lamp.

"I don't feel sleepy, do you?"

"No, do you?"

Then both laughed at the idiocy of the repeated question.

"I could drink the ocean dry, I am so thirsty," said Tom.

"I have some seltzer."

"And—"

"Nothing else."

"Great Scott! What a good boy you are! Only seltzer. Well, let me have some, for I am thirsty."

Moore had sufficient honor left to cause him to be disgusted with his friend.

He wished he had not invited him, and even wondered whether he could not get rid of him before his uncle was stirring in the morning.

Tom King, however, was not one to take a hint, and it was very improbable that he would be so easily got rid of.

It was close upon midnight.

Eleanor had been unable to sleep, and several times had looked from the window into the dim night.

She could not tell why she did so, except that she was of a romantic disposition.

Peter Norton slept soundly, as did Madam Dupont.

One o'clock, and Moore was sleeping heavily, while, in the same bed, Tom King tossed about, wondering why he was there.

He heard a strange noise.

Not the least bit nervous, he sat up in bed to listen.

He fancied he heard some one trying to get into the house.

"Moore," he whispered, "Moore, wake up, I say!"

"What is it?"

"Listen."

"Bah! Some cats playing hide-and-go-seek in the bushes."

Moore turned over in his bed and again succumbed to sleep.

Not so Tom.

He quietly slipped out of bed and began to dress.

"I wish I had my pistol," he muttered, "for I am sure some one is trying to get in."

He listened attentively.

All was still.

Perhaps, after all, he had been deceived.

He began to feel silly.

Dressed, or partly so, and merely because he heard a strange noise in a house where he was sleeping for the first time.

He looked out of the window, but nothing could be seen.

The night seemed unusually dark for August.

He was just about undressing again when he heard a repetition of the noise.

Leslie had stayed in the hydrangeas until he had become thoroughly sleepy.

Once he felt himself loosing all consciousness, and sleep would have overpowered him had not Moore passed just at the time, and the rollicking chorus started by Tom aroused him.

Again he was nearly asleep, and might have given way, but a rustling of the bushes and the loud meows of a couple of cats made him jump.

He had waited for the suspected crooks, and was getting tired.

Never once did he think that they might try the rear of the house.

All his attention was fixed on the front.

A man, one of those suspected by Leslie, had reached the back of the house and was slowly but surely climbing up a wistaria vine to a window which had been left open.

Leslie, getting tired and cramped, and thinking his vigil had been in vain, left his retreat and walked across the lawn.

Although on the look-out for trouble, he was momentarily off his guard.

A sudden shock to his nerves was occasioned by coming unexpectedly on a man crouched among the shrubs.

Leslie wished he had a good pistol, but as he had not, he must make use of his wits.

A silver match safe was in his jacket pocket, on the one end of which was a small guillotine for cutting off the ends of cigars.

By releasing the spring a click was made, very like that caused by the lifting of the hammer of a pistol.

"Utter a sound and you are a dead man!" exclaimed Leslie, quietly. "Hand me your weapons."

The man gave up a revolver, which Leslie transferred to his left hand, putting the match-safe in his pocket.

"Any other weapon?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"That's all. What are you going to do with me?"

"Don't talk so loud or I'll shoot."

"Don't do that. I ain't a bad 'un; it's my pal what dragged me into this. I'd be glad to be out of it."

"Very likely, but you are not."

"I ain't done nothin'."

"No, my friend. And so the less you say now the better for you. I'll just make sure of you for a bit."

Leslie had seen a swing close by, and he cut the rope quickly, and thought it was far too large for positive security, he managed to fasten the man's hands behind him, and then secured the rope to a tree.

"Call out, or make any noise, and I'll shoot. Keep quiet and you may get free without punishment."

The man, evidently a new hand at such crooked work, told how his pal was climbing the vine at the rear of the house.

Leslie was around there quickly, and saw the man nearly up to the open window.

The vine was being dragged away from its frail support by the weight of the man.

A small wire rope or cable had been secured to a chimney and to the ground, for the climbing wistaria's support.

Just as Leslie reached the bottom of the vine Tom King appeared at the open window, and perceiving the shaking of the vines, reached out his arm and with a tremendous jerk wrenched the cable free.

With a terrific noise the wistaria tore itself away and a crash of glass succeeded.

The man had fallen on the glass roof of the orchid house, and the noise aroused the entire household.

Leslie sprang forward, and by the aid of the vine climbed up to the roof of the hot-house, dropped in and gave chase to the would-be burglar.

The man was bleeding from the cuts inflicted by the glass, but he was agile and swift, and managed to reach the door and escape into the garden.

Leslie was following him, but his career was suddenly stopped by Tom King, who seized him around the shoulders, pinioning his arms to his side.

"Now, then, I've got you."

"You fool!" shouted Leslie, "the burglar is escaping while you are holding me."

Peter Norton had reached the orchid-house, and as he held the lantern the light fell on the face of Leslie, who was struggling to get away from Tom King.



## CHAPTER XXV.

## UNDER HIS UNCLE'S ROOF.

Tom King's grip was like that of a steel vise, and it was fortunate that Peter Norton arrived just when he did, or the young claimant would have been strangled.

"So, sir, not satisfied with claiming to be my nephew, you burglarize the house. What did you expect to find?"

"Mr. Norton—believe me—I—I——"

Leslie could not articulate clearly, for King's fingers were still pressing on his throat.

"Take your hand away, Mr. King. Stay here, I shall have some questions to ask you."

When Leslie was free, he shook himself and gulped several times in order that he might get a clear use of his throat again.

"Are you not going to track the burglar?" he asked, as soon as he could speak.

"We have you. Your confederates are of less importance."

King asked for permission to explain, and with a natural eloquence condensed the whole particulars of the evening into very few words.

Returning to Knowlhurst as Moore's guest, he had a strange premonition of danger which would not allow him to sleep. He said that he dressed, and when he heard a noise, which he could not understand, he tried to investigate.

He saw Leslie ascending the wistaria and thought the quickest way to prevent burglary was to cut the vine support.

He did so, and the burglar fell through the roof of the greenhouse.

That in brief was Tom King's story, and its conciseness won the praise of Peter Norton.

"You are sure you saw me ascending the vine?" Leslie asked.

"Yes; at least you fell through the glass and I caught you."

"But suppose I did not fall, but climbed through to try and capture the burglar?"

"Pretty fable!" sneered Moore, who had been the last of the family to arrive on the scene.

"Yes, we have caught you in the very act," angrily came from Norton.

"Uncle, I am no lawyer, neither am I a detective, but I would like to ask how it is this gentleman—Mr. Nelson—is not bleeding, when there is a trail of blood right to this place?"

Eleanor was trembling nervously as she asked the question.

She knew that very active interest in behalf of Leslie would injure rather than benefit him.

"Will you not hear my story, sir?"

"Yes, only I warn you that I may not believe it. I may even use your confession against yourself."

"I will take the risk, sir."

Leslie was not so concise as King, but he told his story well.

It seemed strange to Norton that this imposter, as he thought him, should wait and watch the house to prevent burglary.

"You say you secured one of the burglars?"

"I did, sir."

"Where is he to be found?"

"I don't think I could take you direct to the place, but I cut down a swing and used the rope."

"Mr. King, will you go with Moore to the place indicated and see if there is any truth in the statement?"

Neither of the young men believed there was, but when they saw the man, half unconscious through his struggles to get free, they wondered whether Leslie's story was not right after all.

Moore was annoyed.

He hoped to annihilate Leslie, for he had found out who the young man was.

"What are you doing here?" Moore asked, almost savagely.

"Can't you see? What's the matter with your eyes? Ain't I tied up here?"

"Who tied you?"

"That's just what riles me. It was a slip of a boy. If it had been a man of my own size, and he had bested me, I could have stood it, but he came on me unawares and here I am."

"Who was he?"

"How should I know? I never set eyes on him afore, and I dunno as I wants to again."

"Will you tell my uncle what you were doing here, and how you came to be captured?"

"I'll tell any one, so as I do not go to jail. I never thought I'd run such a chance, but it was all his doings."

"Whose?"

"Ain't you caught him?"

"Yes."

Moore thought he had acted the part of a clever detective, and had caused the man to confess that his capture was all a trick on the part of Leslie, and that the young claimant had planned it so that, if discovered, he might make up a story such as had already been told.

The man was led to where Peter Norton awaited him.

"There, sir! I told you that I had secured one of them," said Leslie, with just a tinge of pride in his voice.

"That's him!" exclaimed the tough, pointing at Leslie.

"Uncle, we have unearthed a clever plot. This man was secured, just as we were told, but it was all a trick, and this person"—pointing to Leslie—"designed it as a shield for his own wrong doing. This man has honestly confessed he was only the paid agent, or dupe, of this imposter."

"What are you blowin' about?" asked the tough.

"You acknowledged that this young man——"

"Was the bloke what tied me to the tree."

"And your partner or principal."

"Holy Smoke! Ha! ha! ha! Excuse me, gen'lemen, for laffin', but who could help it? That there boy came across me unawares and tied me up afore I knew where I was. My pal what led me into this scrape was a big chap; he knows more jails than I have toes in my boots, and has only been out of Sing Sing a week or so."

"I told you so, uncle. I told you I was sure Mr. Nelson was innocent."

"Be quiet, Nelly. You do not know the wiles of this wicked world."

"But uncle, I——"

"Shall I send for the police, uncle, or wait until morning? We can secure these scoundrels in the house."

"Better send for the police at once."

"I will go, Mr. Norton," said Tom King, "if you will allow me."

"Very well, King, but if I were you I would say but little about the case."

An hour later two guardians of the public peace were at Knowlhurst, and again the story was told.

"You say the man cut himself with the glass?"

"Yes."

"Did any of you see him?"

"No."

"We caught a man, about an hour ago, who is wanted for murder. He was bleeding from scratches and cuts. He is called——"

"Black Ned," spoke up the captured burglar.

"Yes, that is one of his names."

"That is the man, sir, as tried to climb the vine. I was told to watch the house while he did the crooked work."

The police, anxious though they always are to let suspicion rest on any one, candidly told Peter Norton that there was no evidence against Leslie, but that it was more than likely the young man had really tried to save the house.

Peter Norton had come to the same conclusion, and insisted that Leslie should stay the remainder of the night there, and have breakfast in the morning.

And that was how Leslie Norton spent the first night under his uncle's roof.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE LOCKET.

Leslie did not sleep. He was tired and well-nigh exhausted, but his mind was too agitated for sleep.

Early in the morning a servant knocked at his door.

"Mr. Nelson, you are wanted in the library."

For a moment Leslie was dazed; he had forgotten he was known by that name.

He followed the servant to the library, glad to have an interview with his uncle before breakfast, and to have a chance of escaping the ordeal of sitting at the table with those who believed him to be an imposter.

Peter Norton was walking up and down the room as Leslie entered.

He paused, pointed to a seat, took one near by, but opposite, all in silence.



"Mr. Nelson, I have sent for you because all night I have been uneasy. I am thankful for what you did last night, and tell you frankly I believe you to be entirely innocent."

"I thank you, sir."

"Now, if you will be open enough with me, I will try and be your friend. Tell me how you came to claim kinship with me and who it was that suggested it."

"May I tell you my story, sir?"

"Are you going to maintain that you are Leslie Norton?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am sorry, for I had hoped to be your friend."

"Hear me, sir, and if I offend you, I offer my apology in advance."

"Tell your story, then; but I am sorry you have not resolved to be honest——"

"I am honest, sir—indeed I am. When my mother died she begged me to write you. You got that letter, sir?"

"Go on."

"I sailed from Galveston on the *Lone Star*. When off the Jersey coast the vessel encountered a storm. I was standing watching the waves, which towered high above the masts, when I was washed overboard. I knew nothing more until several weeks had passed, and then I was in Jamaica. I heard I had been picked up by some smugglers, who had to flee from the revenue officers, and in the kindness of their hearts they took me with them. My brain had been injured by the shock, and I am told I lost my memory and identity until Dr. Allan Welland, who was visiting the West Indies, was called in by Captain Nelson's sister, Sarah Melsham, who had befriended me for so long.

"Gradually my memory returned, and I wrote you, sir, saying that I was alive——"

"I never got any letter."

"And saying that I should never return unless you invited me. I obtained a situation in the house of Mollins & Westover, and found in Mr. Westover of the New York branch a fellow-traveler with me on the *Lone Star*. It was only when Dr. Welland and Captain Nelson knew that some one was suppressing my letters and trying to injure me, that I gave permission to Lawyer Caswell to write. But, sir, I don't want any of your property. Recognize me as your brother's child and I will go away, and you shall never see me again. I will never bring discredit on the name of Norton. Only yesterday, sir, I swore on this locket——"

"Where did you get that?" asked Norton, excitedly.

"My mother gave it to me on her death bed."

"Let me see it."

He took the locket and looked at it long and earnestly.

"Whose hair is this?"

"My mother's."

"And what is behind the hair?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Yes, there is. Boy, you may be an imposter, but"—he paused—"where did your mother get that locket?"

"She told me it was father's, and that it was given to him by his brother in memory of his mother."

"She told you that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Boy, that locket belonged to my father's second wife, and when she died it came into my hands. When my brother Paul left home he asked for something which had belonged to his mother. I gave him that locket. It opens, and some of my father's hair, as well as that of Paul's mother's, should be there."

The old man touched a concealed spring, and the united hair was revealed.

"Boy, I almost believe your story. Do not say a word of this. There is the breakfast-bell. Go, eat heartily, and come back here after breakfast."

"I do not——"

"Go, I say. Get a good meal. I may want you to go a journey with me."

"Business, sir——"

"Must wait my pleasure."

"May I——"

"I will say no more until after you have had your breakfast. Go!"

Peter rung the bell for the servant.

"Take this gentleman to the breakfast-room and send madam here—— Wait, send madam first; you, sir, can stay here until Madam Dupont comes."

A few minutes elapsed before the lady appeared.

Leslie looked around the library, his eyes dilating with wonder as he saw all the curiosities of the old colonial mansion.

But not a word was spoken by either.

Leslie liked the good-natured face of Madam Dupont the moment he saw it, and felt that she would be his friend.

"Madam, this young man is my guest. Will you entertain him at breakfast, and see to it that he is not insulted——"

"Insulted?"

"Yes; my nephew sometimes forgets himself. Eleanor, I know, will be courteous."

The lady smiled, for she had been Eleanor's confidante, and knew that she had placed her heart in Leslie's keeping, though that young claimant did not know it so well as she thought he did.

The breakfast was not a cheerful one.

Moore turned his back on Leslie, and never spoke; Eleanor felt a constraint which was unnatural, and even madam was afraid to talk on anything but the most commonplace subjects, for fear of trenching on forbidden ground.

Every one was glad when the meal was over, and Leslie found his way back to the library.

Eleanor remembered that she had said to him: "I love you," but she did not know whether he heard the words or not.

The consciousness of uttering them had made her shy and bashful, but she was a courageous girl, and managed to control her feelings sufficiently to meet him on his way to the library.

"Mr. Nelson, be of good courage, all will be right," she said, in a whisper.

His heart sank within him as he heard her call him "Nelson."

"Do you believe I am——"

"Leslie Norton? Yes; but I think I like Richard Nelson best."

He could understand now, and he felt braver than before. He would fight for recognition, and would win it, for her sake.

He found Peter Norton still pacing up and down the library, evidently much disturbed in his mind.

"Did you breakfast well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you anything else belonging to your father or mother?"

"Not much, sir."

"What have you?"

"A little charm——"

"Charm? What is it like?"

"It is half a gold coin, but it has worn so smooth that I do not know its value. Father said it was very old."

"I should say it was. That came into the Norton family over two hundred years ago. It is an English guinea—where is it?"

"I have carried it, sir, around my neck ever since father gave it to me."

"And you have it now?"

Leslie pulled a small ribbon which was under his collar, and soon had the half coin in his hand. He had worn it under his shirt.

"Do you see that peculiar mark on the coin?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know what it is?"

"No, Mr. Norton."

"You were never told?"

"No, sir."

Norton went to his desk and took therefrom a small box. In that box, on a cushion of soft velvet, reposed a half coin, similar in size to that worn by Leslie.

The two were placed together and fitted exactly.

"Now do you see what that design is?"

"Yes, sir. It is a Greek letter."

"You are right. That coin was divided by my grandfather, and my father gave me one half and Paul the other."

"Is not that enough, sir, to prove my identity?"

"Well, scarcely. You know you may have——"

"Stolen them, you were about to say."

"No, bought them."

But Peter Norton looked pleasanter than he had done before, and without giving any idea as to where he was going, he left the house in company with Leslie Norton.

Our friend's prospects looked brighter than they had ever done, but the old proverb often proves true that "there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip."

The owner of Knowlthurst talked but little until he had, after taking two tickets for New York, seated himself in a palace car.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

"I AM MASTER NOW."

"Tom, I am the most miserable creature on earth."

"Why?"

"Uncle has made up his mind that he has found his nephew, Leslie."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"Does it not look so?"

"It looks as though the young fellow had a chance to prove his claim."

"And he will do it."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because uncle will believe any yarn told him."

"You know there was never any proof that your cousin was drowned. He may have been saved. Your best policy is to make yourself your uncle's favorite, and then you will be well provided for."

"I'll tell you a secret. If the old man would only die just now I should be all right. Leslie, if he did turn up, would only have an old skull and the workshop."

"Then you fear another will being made?"

"I think he did make one, but I cannot find it."

"You contradict yourself."

"How?"

"About the wills. If another is made, and you cannot find it, how do you know its provisions?"

"It is destroyed."

"Are you sure?"

"Pretty well positive. I found some scraps of paper, which were evidently portions of a will, just after it was believed my cousin was drowned."

"You are playing high."

"And I will win."

"Or lose."

"I will win. I have staked all on one throw. And, if every man on earth recognizes that fellow as Leslie Norton, he should never inherit Knowlhurst."

\* \* \* \* \*

The train in which Peter Norton and Leslie were seated sped on toward its destination.

Norton read the paper; Leslie was far too excited to settle his mind on anything.

He did not know what Peter Norton intended doing, and he was uneasy about his situation, for he had no desire to lose it.

When New York was reached, Peter asked the way to the office of Mollins & Westover.

"You must get a day's vacation," he said. "I will satisfy the firm."

"Thank you, sir."

Leslie could not talk. He was full of anxiety.

"Do you say Westover was a fellow-passenger on the *Lone Star*?"

"Yes, Mr. Norton."

"Then we will see what he has to say."

The office was reached.

Westover was at home. Leslie telephoned him, and Jake answered that he would be pleased to see him at once, but in the afternoon he was to meet the "Brummagem Pet" and "Nick, the Slugger," who were expected to arrive by the steamer at one-thirty.

Norton hailed a coupé, and ordered the driver to proceed as rapidly as possible to the residence of the sporting merchant.

Mr. Norton and Leslie found the sporting merchant in a gymnasium at the back of his house, practicing on the horizontal bar, while for audience he had several well-known pugs.

By which term we do not mean the noble class of the canine family, designated by that name, but the ignoble members of the human family who think that man was made to pound and pummel his brother man.

"Ah, Leslie my boy! Taking another day off? I am surprised at you, but it is all right; you stick better to business than any other clerk I have ever known."

Leslie introduced Peter Norton, and then Jake felt it only courteous to make his new visitors acquainted with those already gathered.

"This, Mr. Norton, is the featherweight champion of South America. You will remember his great fight with Abe Sim-

mons, whom he knocked silly in the third round. And this brave man is Ikey Jacobs, the only representative of his race in the prize-ring. I have great hopes of Ikey. He put a man—good fellow, too—to sleep in one round, and doubled up the best middle-weight, barring the champion, in three."

"Very honored, I am sure; but I have a little business with you, Mr. Westover."

"Cert! I'm with you. I never let business interfere with pleasure, or *vice versa*; so, boys, enjoy yourselves in my absence. So long!"

Jake led the way to a room in the house designated as his "den."

It was crowded with every kind of implement of sport. Boxing-gloves, racquets, baseball bats, quoits, dumbbells and such like things were in every part of the room.

Banjos and guitars showed that more than one member of the family enjoyed the harmony to be obtained from string instruments.

"Mr. Westover, what do you know about this young man?" asked Peter Norton.

"I met him on the *Lone Star*—tumbled to him at once; wished he was old enough to be a sport. Wondered what his old curmudgeon of an uncle would think of him; heard he was drowned; came back from 'Frisco, where I lost a 'pile,' and found the dead lad a clerk in my office, and a better clerk never lived."

"You are sure he is the same one you knew on the *Lone Star*?"

"Cert! I never mistake identity. Once seen, never forgotten, is my standard."

"Well, sir, I am the old curmudgeon of an uncle."

"The deuce!"

"Fact! I am Peter Norton, and if you are right, this is my nephew."

As the two rode back to the hotel, Peter had begun to call his companion Leslie, which was a hopeful sign.

The day passed, and on the morning of the next Leslie was fully identified, for, staying at the Hoffman House was Thomas Offiltree, the famous Texan colonel, and he was well acquainted with Leslie's father and Leslie.

The return to Knowlhurst was one of triumph.

Every acquaintance of old Norton's was called upon to recognize Leslie, and when the house was reached Eleanor was on the steps.

"Rejoice, my dear, for this is your cousin. Nay, don't draw back. Kiss, as cousins should."

And the old man laughed so heartily that he ruptured one of the small blood-vessels at the base of the brain.

He was seized with vertigo, and fell forward. Luckily, he was caught by Leslie, who, with the aid of Eleanor, carried him into the house and laid him on his bed.

A physician was soon in attendance.

One look at the pallid face of the old man, and the doctor muttered:

"I am too late."

The cry went through the house:

"Master is dead!"

It was heard by Moore.

He had kept away when his uncle came home.

Now he entered the library, where Eleanor and Leslie were weeping.

Roughly and rudely he laid his hands on Leslie's shoulder.

"Scoundrel! I am master here now! Go, or I will throw you out!"

"He is your cousin, Moore."

"It is false, Nelly. He worked on the old crank's feelings. I am master now."

"For his sake," said Leslie, calmly, pointing to the upper room in which Peter Norton was lying, "for his sake, I submit; but a time will come when you will be sorry."

"Go, I say! And never come here until I invite you."

"Moore—"

But Eleanor was pushed aside, and Moore escorted Leslie to the door; and, as the young Texan stepped out, the door was locked upon him.

"I am master now!" Moore almost shouted, in exuberant glee.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## MOORE'S HUMILIATION.

Leslie walked quietly down the graveled driveway, feeling very sad at heart.

He had not seen much of his uncle, but had begun to respect him.

Once he thought he heard his name called softly, but dismissed the thought as a chimera of the brain.

Again he heard it:

"Leslie!"

The form of Eleanor was discernible through the trees, and, though her eyes were swollen with weeping, there was a smile on her face as she saw Leslie stop.

"Leslie, I have lost my best friend," she said, as she approached.

"Yes, Eleanor, and I know you suffer deeply."

"What do you intend doing?"

"What can I do but go back to New York and attend to business?"

"Will you not stay in the village a day or two, or until after the funeral?"

"What good would it do?"

"I wish it."

"I will stay. I would do anything for you. Your wish is a command to me."

"Thank you. I believe in you."

"Eleanor, that is my only consolation, for I love you."

The cousins parted, the one to go back to Knowlhurst, sad-hearted and mournful, the other to find lodgment in the village—not because he thought any good could come of it, but simply that she wished it.

Moore had forgotten all the laws of decency. He was master, so he said, and should not wait for funeral or will, but would act at once.

The conceited young fellow, who forgot that he was still a boy in the eyes of the law, began ordering every one about as though he was the recognized owner of Knowlhurst.

The doctor was disgusted with him.

"Miss Loring, may I speak with you a few moments?"

"Certainly, doctor."

"You may think it strange, but I cannot talk to Mr. Burnett; he disgusts me."

"It is only his way, doctor; he is so cool that he is often misunderstood."

Eleanor defended her cousin in the only way she could.

"Perhaps so; but I have two things I wish to say. I want a speedy messenger to go to your uncle's lawyer, and I want to keep the door of your uncle's room locked until after—the inquest."

"Inquest?"

"Yes; you know the death was so sudden that inquiries will be made, and the law must be satisfied."

"But there is—there can be—nothing wrong?"

"No, my dear Miss Loring, nothing wrong—only the law insists."

"But cannot I see my uncle?"

"No. I must do my duty. I want to be able to say—to the coroner, you know—that no one has had access to him."

"But—"

"Who can go to the lawyer?"

"I will send at once."

"Do so, please; and say it is urgent."

The doctor was as fidgety as a child; he stayed in the death-chamber, with the door locked, and yet he paced up and down the floor, sometimes muttering to himself.

Moore had never once offered to go into the room.

Perhaps he had counted too early the profits of his harvest.

For when, an hour later, the lawyer entered, Moore realized very quickly that he was not yet the master.

"My dear sir, you forget for the moment, in your anxiety, that you are not of age," said the man of red tape and legal puzzles.

"But, as my uncle's next of kin and heir, I—"

"My dear Burnett, morally you are right, but legally there is no next of kin or heir until the will has been probated."

"But, sir, I have the right to take the responsibility—"

"No—unfortunately, no. I hate all bother—it upsets and unnerves me; but, by a regular and registered deed, made, signed

and sealed some three months ago, I was appointed your uncle's attorney, and given full management of the estate until such times as he revoked the deed, or his will was probated."

"But is not that unusual?"

"Yes."

"Then why did Peter Norton do it? He must have been mad!"

"It was to guard against that very charge."

"What?"

"Your uncle, my respected client, sent for me, and it is, I think, no breach of confidence to tell you. He had heard some hints that certain of his relatives thought him *non compos mentis*—in other words, that he was cranky—so he gave his whole business into my hands. I am beyond the chance of such a charge."

Moore saw that, after all, he was not master, and he was furious.

He hated himself and everybody around him. He felt humiliated.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## CHECKMATED.

For an hour doctor and lawyer were in close consultation in the room occupied by Peter Norton. The servants began to talk among themselves.

Jane was certain that her master had been poisoned.

There would be a policeman sent for, some one would be arrested, then a public trial, and they would all be called as witnesses.

"It is that fellow, that impostor," the gardener declared. "I never liked the look of him, and master went away all day and a whole night with him. It is my belief that young fellow will swing for it."

A word had grown to a sentence, an expression of wonder into a direct charge, a suspicion had become a certainty, and before the sun sank below the horizon a policeman in plain clothes was watching and shadowing Leslie Norton.

When the lawyer left the death-chamber, he summoned Madam Dupont, and asked her to call together all the household.

Eleanor, her eyes red and swollen; Moore, defiant, even in his unpleasant humiliation; the servants, and even little Trix, a colored child, who had been found homeless by Peter Norton and cared for since, were all assembled in the dining-hall.

"Is this all the family?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"But I thought there was another?"

"Mr. King went home early this morning."

"I did not refer to a guest; I spoke of Mr. Leslie Norton."

It was like the bursting of a stormcloud—sudden and terrible.

Eleanor looked at the lawyer, with a pleasant wonder on her face.

Moore was white and angry; the servants looked at each other; and, if ever faces expressed thoughts, each said to the other: "I told you so. He'll be arrested, sure."

"I was given to understand," said the man of the law, "that my client had recognized Leslie Norton as his nephew, and had brought him home this morning."

"Yes, sir, my uncle did so," spoke up Eleanor, bravely.

"Where is the young man now?"

"I ordered him out. He is an impostor, and the cause of my uncle's death; I bade him go," asserted Moore, with audacious defiance.

"Does that matter? Your uncle had some rights. Who can tell where he is?"

"I believe he is in the village, sir."

"Good. He must be near at hand. I have called you together, in obedience to the desire expressed by my friend, Mr. Peter Norton, some three months ago. It was his desire that his will should be read before his burial, and that everything should be settled, as far as possible, before his remains were taken to their last resting place. Now, therefore, by virtue of my position, I desire that you should recognize my authority and remember I am in sole charge here. To-morrow, at noon, I wish you all to assemble in this room, to listen to the reading of the will and such other documents as the testator desired should be made known to you."

With a wave of his hand, he signified that the conference was over, and the servants returned to their duties.



"Madam Dupont, will you favor me with an interview in the library?"

When the lawyer was satisfied that no one could overhear the conversation, he asked the pointed question:

"What do you think of the claimant, Leslie Norton?"

"I think, sir, he is Mr. Norton's nephew."

"Why?"

"There is a family resemblance, and Mr. Norton was too shrewd to recognize him if there was any doubt about the identity."

"Very good. How does Mr. Burnett feel toward him?"

"I would rather not answer that question."

"You are right; he has answered it himself. It is the doctor's wish, madam, that no one should enter Norton's room until after the inquest."

No one slept much that night, and all were well pleased when the sun arose early in the morning.

Moore had spent the hours of the night in wondering whether there was not some way by which his uncle's strange conduct could be investigated and his acts set aside.

He had fully made up his mind that he would consult another lawyer, and, it might be, succeed in setting the lawyers fighting, if nothing else.

The hours dragged along slowly, and when the old-fashioned clock in the hall struck the hour of noon there was almost unseemly haste in reaching the dining-room.

The lawyer looked puzzled.

Something was worrying him.

Moore had another lawyer present, and briefly explained that, after the very unusual action of his dear uncle, he thought it better to be represented by counsel.

"I am convinced," he said, "that uncle was unduly influenced by some one. He always represented I was his heir, and I have a right to protect myself."

"I am very much pleased to meet my learned brother, and my task will be all the easier," Norton's lawyer remarked. "One thing has puzzled me. I drew a will for Peter Norton about four months back, but that will I cannot find. It appears, as far as I have been able to ascertain, that some one has a duplicate key of Mr. Norton's desk, and that person has been in the habit of paying nocturnal visits to the desk."

Moore turned very white while the lawyer was speaking, but beyond the pallor of his face he showed no other signs of nervousness.

"If the will has been abstracted from the desk, I have authority to find the possessor of the key, and the law shall have its full course."

Moore stood up and confronted his uncle's lawyer.

"I have a key to the desk; my uncle gave it to me. Do you charge me with abstracting the will?"

"No, sir; I make no charges. You say your uncle gave you the key?"

"He did."

"When?"

"Several months ago. He told me I was his heir, and that if anything happened to him, I should have the key by me, and so save confusion."

"You saw nothing of a will?"

"Yes, I did."

"Do you remember the date?"

"No."

"Do you remember the provisions of the will?"

"Yes, very well."

"Look over that"—handing him a document—"is that the will you saw?"

"Yes."

"Did your uncle know you read the will?"

"Yes," answered Moore, boldly; "he invited me to read it."

"Was that the time when Madam Dupont, walking in her sleep, startled you, and you let your candle drop?"

"No, I—don't—remember—that occurrence."

"Once more, I am sorry to have to ask you these questions, but my learned brother will see the necessity. Was it before or after the supposed death of your Cousin Leslie?"

"Before."

"There is nothing left me but to read the contents of the only will I can find."

The lawyer adjusted his spectacles, and read, in a far from eloquent manner, the will which Moore had secretly read.

After bequests to Madam Dupont and the servants, the testator bequeathed twenty thousand dollars each to Moore and Eleanor, the workroom, the orchid-house and the gilded skull to Leslie, should he be alive, and the residue of the property to Moore and Eleanor.

There was silence after the reading of the will.

Moore conversed in a whisper with his lawyer, and Eleanor placed her hand in Madam Dupont's.

Presently Moore arose.

"I find I am executor under that will, and I now assert myself. The creature called Leslie Norton is an impostor; the genuine Leslie is drowned, and a tablet in the church proclaims that fact."

"But your uncle recognized the youth."

"My uncle was insane. I can easily prove it, and will do so, if pressed by my enemies. The old man ought to have died before. He lived altogether too long. After the funeral I shall close up Knowlhurst, and travel for a few years; but I shall leave instructions with my counsel to resist any claims made either by you, sir, or by the impostor called Leslie Norton."

No one attempted to interrupt Moore, but a loud ring at the doorbell caused a temporary lull, and Moore stood, arms folded, waiting for the return of the servant who had gone to the door.

"Mr. Leslie Norton."

The name fell like a thunderbolt on those present.

Moore turned upon the innocent servant.

"How dare you allow that man in here? You shall leave my service at once. And as for you"—turning to Leslie—"I had already turned you out of the house. Go, or the police shall be sent for—"

"I invited Mr. Norton."

"You did? Then you can go, too. I tell you I am master here, and shall assert myself until the courts decide against me."

"There will be no need of any interference of the courts," the lawyer remarked.

"You withdraw, then?"

"No, sir."

"Then I call upon all here to witness that I assert that I am master here."

"Not yet."

A panel in the wall had slid back, and revealed the figure of Peter Norton.

"What trick is this?" shouted Moore.

"No trick," answered Norton. "I have only wanted to try you, and see if you were worthy to be my heir."

Eleanor had crossed the room and thrown herself in her uncle's arms.

"You are not dead?"

"No, my dear; I am very much alive."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### A MEDICAL MIRACLE.

When the doctor had declared that he was too late, he really believed Peter Norton to be dead.

The little clot of blood which had formed on the base of the brain had so numbed him that coma, like unto death, had set in.



A very slight movement of the muscles of the neck caused the doctor to try an experiment.

He had with him a little pellet of nitro-glycerine.

It was a new invention, and the physician trembled at the consequences of using it.

It might destroy the little vitality left, or, on the other hand, it would, perhaps, give life and power to the heart.

In Norton's case, the doctor felt safe in using it, for he was convinced nothing short of the almost miraculous could restore him to life.

He opened the old man's teeth, and placed the pellet on his tongue.

There was no attempt made at swallowing it.

A small quantity of whiskey, poured gradually on the tongue, caused the pellet to glide softly down the throat.

Presently the effect was seen.

The nitro-glycerine had dissolved; the shock was felt in every part of the body.

Norton's face became purple, then gradually the blood diffused itself over his body; the shock had dispelled the clot. He opened his eyes and looked around; then closed them, and fell into a calm sleep.

So absorbed was the doctor in his dangerous experiment that he forgot all about the effect of his previous words to Eleanor.

He forgot that all were under the belief that Norton was dead.

He dare not summon them, for a shock might undo all the good he had done.

He dare not leave the bedside of his patient.

An hour passed, and Norton awoke.

"Have I been sick?" he asked.

"Very."

"Did I die?"

"What a question! Are you not alive?"

"I thought I heard you say you were too late."

"I did say so."

"And then it seemed to me that my niece, Eleanor, said: 'Poor uncle! I loved him so.' Did she think I was dead?"

"Yes, and they think so still."

"I am so glad. Help me, doctor. I would give a thousand dollars to know what they think of me after death. It is not wrong. Send for my lawyer, but let all others think I am dead."

"But——"

"Let them arrange for funeral, or anything they like——"

"I can fix it. They think you died suddenly. An inquest must be held."

"That is the very thing. Doctor, stand by me. So much depends on it."

The lawyer came, and entered into the conspiracy.

The result we have seen. Moore exposed himself completely, and proved how little he really cared for the uncle who had done so much for him.

When Eleanor had thrown herself in her uncle's arms, the others were about to withdraw, but Norton bade all stay.

The lawyer explained how even the doctor had fancied Norton to be dead, and how the eccentric patient had insisted on the harmless ruse.

"It is not given to many to know what is said of them after death," said Peter Norton, "but I have heard all. Moore Burnett, did I ever give you a key to my desk?"

"No, sir."

"Did I ever tell you I made you my sole heir?"

"No, sir."

"You think me insane. I overheard your conversation with your cousin, some time ago; that was why I executed a deed of

trust, which the lawyer explained to you yesterday. I guarded against your plots. What would you gain by the will you found? I had secreted the other. Where, do you think? In the gilded skull, and in that skull, also, was the deed to Knowlhurst, duly executed in favor of Leslie Norton. That skull was worth two hundred thousand dollars to Leslie, whom I welcome to-day as my nephew and heir.

"Stay—I have not done yet. I know how you acted at the wreck of the *Lone Star*, for my agents have found out your perfidy. Now, in the presence of all, my relatives and domestics, I ask my lawyer to make out a deed of gift for twenty thousand dollars. The money shall be yours to-day, but never one cent more will you receive from the estate. I, not you, am master of Knowlhurst."

Eleanor and Leslie both pleaded with Norton, but he was obdurate. He softened only so far as to say:

"If Moore Burnett can produce a black tulip, or perfect a flying-machine, I will reinstate him, and make him equal heir with Leslie and Eleanor."

The mystery of Leslie Norton was cleared up, and Peter was proud of his nephew.

Three months later Moore paid a visit to Knowlhurst, in the dark of the evening. He was seen by several of the domestics, but neither his uncle nor cousins received a visit from him.

In the darkness of midnight there rang out a heart-rending cry of fire.

The flames spread rapidly, lapping the library of Knowlhurst in a great, warm embrace.

Promptitude and efficiency saved all the rest of the building, but its great antique library, with its wealth of historical riches, was completely destroyed. There was every proof that an incendiary had been at work, but Peter Norton refused to have any investigation made.

Early the next year there was a civil war in one of the South American republics, and in the first battle fought a young American was killed.

He had fought on the side of the insurgents, and in his pocket was found an old letter, addressed to Moore Burnett, telling how Leslie Norton had been traced to Jamaica by one of Burnett's secret agents.

He rests in a trench among many unknown.

His cousin, the at one time unfortunate Leslie Norton, that same year became the husband of Eleanor Loring, and Captain Nelson stood behind the young man, acting the part of "best man."

Peter Norton is living yet, though tottering on the brink of the grave.

He is proud to think that a Norton will still lord it over Knowlhurst, and that in Leslie Norton the country will have a worthy citizen, and new honors will be accorded the name and family of the Knowlhurst Nortons.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 14, will contain "The Diamond Legacy; or, The Queen of an Unknown Race," by Cornelius Shea. This new story beats them all. A little country village is the scene of the discovery of one of the finest gems ever known. The unknown race and its beautiful queen are both interesting, the queen especially. The hero, an American boy, is interesting, his friends are interesting, and, last but not least, the whole story is so interesting that you had better not start to read it in a train. Why? because you'll surely go past your station, clear to the end of the route, if you do.



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